

Rosalie Dare's Test



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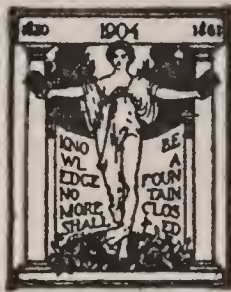


"SEE THAT SAIL OUT THERE!"—Page 15.

ROSALIE DARE'S TEST

BY
AMY BROOKS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
BY THE AUTHOR



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ROSALIE DARE'S TEST



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ROSALIE DARE'S TEST

CHAPTER I

THE LITTLE NEW FRIEND

WHITE clouds lazily floating across the blue sky, wiry grass blowing in the soft breeze, and a little girl running, skipping, as bright, as cheery as the sunlight on the grass.

How gay she was!

Her brown eyes were laughing, her short brown curls were flying, as she hurried toward the little bluff that overlooked the bay.

Up over the hot sand and coarse grass she went, sturdily persisting until she reached the highest part of the bluff,

where beyond the trees she saw a line of hills, purple in the distance.

She stood looking off across the bay, beyond the buildings of the little town, and distant trees, to those still more distant hills.

“Hills at home to wonder about, and more hills here to wonder *more* about,” she whispered.

Little Rosalie Dare wondered about many things, but she never saw distant hills without wondering what lay hidden behind them.

“The hills I see from our porch at home are the ones that hide the house where Aunt Cynthia lives,” she thought.

“I wonder what those hills are hiding? I’ll ask Uncle Bruce, and maybe he’ll tell me that another of my aunts lives there.”

She laughed softly.

“Aunt Cynthia’s house isn’t just behind those hills at home,” she said. “Uncle Bruce says that Aunt Cynthia lives a long way beyond those hills, not just behind them.”

Another little girl, unseen by Rosalie, had been steadily climbing the sandy slope to the bluff.

Rosalie was still looking out across the water when a voice behind her startled her.

“Where’s the other little girl?” it demanded.

Rosalie turned.

A slim little figure stood gazing at her, with round eyes.

“What other little girl?” she asked as easily as if the stranger were one of her playmates, instead of a child whom she had never seen before.

"The one you were talking to," the girl said promptly.

"Oh, I know what you mean," Rosalie said with a laugh. "I was just telling myself something. There was no other little girl here with me."

The grey eyes looked puzzled for a second, then dropping to her knees, the new girl crept to the edge of the bluff, and, holding fast to the wiry grass, peeped over.

Evidently satisfied, she crawled back to where she had first stood, and sprang to her feet.

"I thought maybe she was hiding down over the edge. I do, sometimes."

"Who?" Rosalie asked.

"Other girl," said the stranger.

"I *told* you there was no other girl," Rosalie said, vexed that what she had said should be questioned.

“I know that, but all the same, I looked,” was the pert reply.

“You didn’t believe me?” Rosalie said, her cheeks very red.

“No,” said the other, “an’ I’m no worse’n you, for you didn’t b’lieve me when I said I often hid just over the edge. You didn’t say anything, but you *looked* don’t b’lieve, just as plain as anything, but I can prove it. Want to see me do it?”

“No, oh *no!*” cried Rosalie clasping her hands, and shaking her head.

“Well, I’m going to,” said the other girl, and over the edge she went, thrusting her toes into crevices, while keeping a firm hold on the tough, wiry sod.

Still holding tightly, she ducked her head.

“Now you can’t see me!” she cried.

“No, no! Come back!” shrilled Rosalie.

There was no reply, but after a moment the new girl's head appeared over the edge, and then, slowly she made her way up to firm ground and safety.

“There!” she cried, seating herself near Rosalie. “We *b'lieve* each other now! We can be friends. My name is Guarda McLean. What's yours?”

“Rosalie Dare.”

“Oh, what a pretty name,” cried the little girl. “It's finer than mine, but I *had* to be ‘Guarda’ because there has always been a Guarda McLean in our family.”

She said it rather primly, and Rosalie wondered if it were fine to have a long line of ancestors all bearing the same name. The little girl spoke as if she thought so, and Rosalie wondered why.

The little girl leaned forward, and looked up in her face.

“Are you going to live here?” she asked, eagerly, adding; “I do hope you are.”

“Oh, just a few weeks,” Rosalie said, smiling.

“And then?” Guarda questioned.

“And then,” repeated Rosalie, “I’ll go home with Aunt Constance and Uncle Bruce, and *next* I’ll be going to Aunt Cynthia’s for the winter.”

“And I’ll live right here with Aunt Belinda at the shore,” Guarda said, “and I love the shore.”

“I love it, too,” agreed Rosalie, “and I love to watch the vessels and wonder where they’re going. See that sail out there!”

“There always are sails in sight,” said Guarda, “and I never tire of watching them.”

“When I go to Aunt Cynthia’s,” said

Rosalie, "I'm to go to private school, and I'm to study music, and dancing. Won't that be fun?"

"Ye-s," Guarda said slowly. "I'd like to have music lessons, but I don't care much for school. I can't seem to get interested in the studies."

"Wouldn't you like to learn to dance?" Rosalie asked.

"I *can* dance now."

"Oh, fine!" cried Rosalie, "Who taught you?"

"There was a lady here two years ago who had been on the stage. She was staying at the hotel, and one day she passed our house, and saw me skipping around while Uncle Bob sat on the porch playing the pipes.

"I didn't know how to dance, and was

hopping about, keeping time to the music, but she seemed to feel sure that I could learn, and she gave me lessons all summer. I can do the Highland Fling, the Sword Dance, and some hornpipes and jigs."

"Oh, fine, fine! Guarda, will you dance for me some day?" asked Rosalie, eagerly.

"I'll dance for you any time you come over to my house," said Guarda, "but the rooms in our cottage are small, so there's not much space for dancing, and the pipes sound too loud. I'd have to dance outdoors for you, but next Monday night, I'm to dance over at the hotel, the 'Sea-View House,' and then Uncle Bob and I shall look better for the dance, because we'll both wear Scotch costumes."

"Oh, Guarda! What time will you dance? Do you know?" cried Rosalie, her eyes sparkling.

“Sure, I know!” said Guarda. “There’s to be a concert just before the ball, and there’ll be a singer, and a fine violinist, a dancer, and that’s me.”

“Next Monday night!” said Rosalie, “and I’ll tell Aunt Constance and Uncle Bruce, and I know they’ll be willing to go and take me. Oh, Guarda! I think it’s great that you can dance.”

“Maybe you won’t think it great when you see me, but the folks at the hotel seem to like to see it,” Guarda said quietly.

“You don’t act as if you thought it smart to be able to dance, but that only makes me sure you can do *wonderfully*, and I almost can’t wait for Monday night.”

Uncle Bruce had taken a cottage for the season at the shore, and Aunt Constance had preferred that to having rooms at the one hotel that the little town afforded.

Now, on the porch, she stood, shading her eyes with her hand, and looking eagerly in every direction for her little niece Rosalie.

“What can have kept her so long?” she said, softly.

She was always a bit nervous when Rosalie was out of sight. She was as fond of the child as if it had been her own.

She went back into the cosy living-room, and sat down by the window. A book that Rosalie had been reading lay open on the broad window-seat, and a wild rose that she had brought in lay on its printed page.

Aunt Constance took the rose, and for a few moments looked at its fresh beauty, then she replaced it on the book, took a long breath, and looked out across the dancing waves.

“Rosalie, little Rosalie!” she said softly,

“What will next winter be, with you at Cynthia’s home?”

“That’s what I had in mind when I planned our trip to California,” said Uncle Bruce, who had come in from the hall, just in time to hear what she had said.

“With new scenes, the time for Rosalie to return to us will seem to arrive sooner, and Rosalie, will seem even more precious to us than before.”

“She’ll enjoy that fine private school, and the music, I know, and her nimble feet will surely like to dance, but tell me, Bruce, do you think Stanton will be kind to Rosalie?”

“Young Stanton Gifford has been completely spoiled by his mother, and has not the least desire to be kind to any one.

“As to Rosalie, she can get along with

him if *any one* could, but even Rosalie would lose patience, I believe, after a while.”

Out in the sunlight, a cheery voice was singing:

“Butterfly, butterfly,
Where do you dwell?
In a white lily
That blooms in the dell.

Butterfly, butterfly,
Stay with me, stay!
You shall have honey
And cream every day.”

Rosalie ran in at the open door, her cheeks flushed, and her eyes shining.

“Oh, I’ve just met the dearest little girl, and she can dance the Highland Fling, and jigs and ‘*horn pies*,’—why, Uncle Bruce, what’s funny? Did you ever see any one dance a horn pie?”

“I surely never did,” said Uncle Bruce, as well as he could speak for laughing,

“and Rosalie, dear, I’ve eaten every sort of pie but ‘horn pie,’ and,”—

“Don’t tease her, Bruce,” said Aunt Constance. “It is ‘hornpipe’ that she means.”

“All right, hornpipe, then,” said Rosalie, “and she says her name is Guarda McLean, and the big ball-room at the ‘Sea-View’ is where she is to dance, and the lady who taught her was on the stage a long time except last summer, and her aunt’s name is Belinda, and may I go? Will you take me?”

“Rosalie, we are not sure where you have been all this morning, and we’ve not the least idea where you wish to go or when,” said Aunt Constance.

“I thought I told you that,” said Rosalie, “I meant to. It’s next Monday night, at the ‘Sea-View,’ and there’s to be a con-

cert before the dance. There'll be other people in the concert, but the one I want most to see is Guarda McLean."

Then Rosalie told about sitting on the bluff and how the little girl surprised her.

"Where does this little girl live?" Aunt Constance asked.

"Oh, somewhere in this town," said Rosalie, "and there's one thing I forgot to tell you. Her Uncle Bob plays the pipes."

"Fine!" said Uncle Bruce, "and did you tell her that I play the jew's-harp beautifully?"

"Bruce, dear, please stop teasing," begged Aunt Constance, but she was quite as amused as he.

"What is a jew's-harp? Does he play it?" Rosalie asked.

"I never heard him," Aunt Constance

said, laughing, "but maybe he did play one when he was a little chap. Boys enjoy almost anything that makes a noise."

"And are we going over to see Guarda dance?" Rosalie asked eagerly. "I'd so love to see her."

"I'll ask something about this entertainment, and if it is quite all right, we'll surely go," said Uncle Bruce. Then his eyes began to twinkle.

"Let me clearly understand about this entertainment," he said. "The little girl is to dance, and—what is it her uncle is on the program for? Did you say he would smoke his pipe while she dances?"

"Oh, Uncle Bruce! I do believe you know I didn't say that," cried Rosalie, laughing.

"I said, 'Her uncle will play the pipes while she dances'."

“Now that sounds better,” declared Uncle Bruce. “For the matter of that, *I* could smoke a pipe while she danced, but I’d be far too courteous to do such a thing. Already I think better of her uncle.”

Uncle Bruce learned that the entertainment to be given at the “Sea-View,” was in aid of the little church, and he came home with three tickets for Monday evening.

“The church is too small for much of an audience,” he said, “so the manager of the hotel has given the use of the ballroom, several guests have volunteered to sing, there will be a reader, and the little McLean lass will dance.

“I find that her uncle is prominent in the church, and is a man much liked here for his sterling character. The entertainment is entitled, ‘An Evening in Scotland,’ and I am sure we shall enjoy it.”

The maid had asked permission to go to the post-office to inquire for a letter that she had become rather anxious about.

“It’s from my cousin, and it should have been here before this,” she said.

“She’s always that prompt about writin’, and I feel sure the letter hasn’t found me, down here at the shore.”

Mary returned with the letter. Her cousin, when addressing the envelope, had forgotten to send it, “Care of Mr. Bruce Travers, Surfside Cottage,” so it had remained at the office, waiting for Miss Mary Coogan to call and claim it.

“I see you have your letter, Mary,” said Uncle Bruce.

“An’ glad I am to have it,” said Mary, “as I was gettin’ anxious for all the family news, an’ the letter is full of it. Sure, my cousin was busy gettin’ ready to be married

an' delayed writin', an' now I do be sure I'll not hear from her for one while."

"Why, Mary, what has happened?" Aunt Constance asked kindly.

"Happened, is it?" Mary replied.

"An' if when she's single, jist *gettin'* *ready* to be married keeps her too busy to write, what time will she have *after*, an' her marryin' a chap with six children?"

"True enough," said Uncle Bruce, "but with six children to care for she won't be lonesome."

"An' they're little relations of hers," said Mary. "They are the children of my cousin's brother's second wife's sister."

Uncle Bruce pressed his hand to his forehead, and said it made his head ache to try to think what that relationship might be.

"What relation are they?" Rosalie

asked, when Mary had gone out to the kitchen.

"I've not the least idea," said Uncle Bruce, "and I can't spare the time to figure it out."

Rosalie ran out to the kitchen to see if Mary could tell her, but the maid was too busy to talk.

"Then you can call them cousins," said Rosalie. "That is what Hal Dana does. He told me so just before we came here. He said that any relatives that weren't *anything else*, you could call *cousins*, and let it go at that. What did he mean by 'let it go at that,' do you know?"

"I can't answer questions when I'm so busy," Mary said, and Rosalie ran out through the hall to the porch, where she stood listening. From somewhere along the shore came strange sounds, like the

buzzing of a thousand bees, with a thread of melody sounding now and then above the weird, droning music.

“Oh, Uncle Bruce! Please come out and hear this funny noise!” cried Rosalie, and at the same moment they heard Mary’s shrill voice exclaiming, “Oh, oh, there’s that noise I heard when I passed the house where a crazy man with a plaid skirt on only half long enough for him, an’ himself was busy blowin’ wind into a bag that shrieked! Oh, oh! What kind of a town is this?”

CHAPTER II

BERT AND GUARDA

WHEN Monday came, Rosalie awoke, impatient for the time when they would be going over to the hotel.

“How long is it before concert time?” she asked, when Mary came to call her.

“It’s about as long as yer patience can stand waitin’ for it,” said Mary with a laugh.

“Oh, that wouldn’t be any time at all,” Rosalie said, “because I’d like to see Guarda dance now.”

“Then I advise ye to get busy with something that will *keep* ye busy all day, an’ the time will go so fast that, before

ye know it ye'll be on the way to the fine time at the hotel."

It happened that the day proved to be a delightful one, and the first occurrence made Rosalie very happy.

She was dressed in her bathing-suit, and out on the porch, waiting for Aunt Constance, when a lithe little figure in a blue-and-white bathing-suit came running along the board walk.

In front of the porch she looked up, and a bright smile parted her lips.

"Oh, now I know where you live, Rosalie!" she cried "I've passed here lots of times, but I never saw you."

"And I didn't see you, Guarda. If I had seen you I'd have called to you to stay and play with me."

"I'd stay now," said Guarda, "but we're all ready for the beach. Let's go."

“Wait just a second for Aunt Constance. She is going with me,” said Rosalie.

Just at that moment, the door opened, and Aunt Constance came out.

“I’m sorry, Rosalie, but letters have come that must be promptly answered, and I shall have to spend this forenoon writing, instead of on the beach,” she said.

“But this is Guarda McLean, and she stopped on her way to the beach. May I go with her?” coaxed Rosalie. “I’ll not go beyond the little thin sheets of water that wash up on the sand.”

“She couldn’t get out too far, for I can swim like a fish, and I’ll look out for her,” Guarda said quickly.

Aunt Constance smiled at her eagerness. Guarda looked sturdy, and strong enough for anything.

“You may run along together,” she said,

“but watch her, Guarda. She is apt to be careless. Rosalie doesn’t mean to be, but she forgets.”

Guarda turned to wave her hand. “I’ll take care of her!” she said.

“How old are you?” Rosalie asked.

“Nine,” said Guarda, “and I’m growing fast this summer, Auntie says.”

“I’m seven,” said Rosalie, “so why did you say you could take care of me? You’re not much larger than I.”

“Because I’m stronger than you are, and because I can swim, Rosalie, *and*—because I like you,” Guarda said, turning to look straight into the soft, brown eyes.

“Oh, that’s the best reason of all!” cried Rosalie, “and, Guarda, I like you.”

They clasped hands, and ran over the coarse grass to the hard, wet sand where the tide was receding, leaving tiny shells

behind. Wave after wave came rolling in with frothy crest curled high, then with a soft, lispingsound, crawling thinly back to join the next incoming roller.

Hand in hand they stood in the shallow water, laughing when the foam-capped waves broke against their slender legs and chasing each wave as it ebbed.

"See that stick floating out there beyond the breakers?" Guarda asked.

"I see it!" said Rosalie, "It bobs on every wave."

"Well, watch me swim out and get it," said Guarda, who had become tired of simply playing in the water.

"Oh, Guarda! Not so far!" cried Rosalie, in real fear.

"Pooh! That's not far!" was the quick reply. "I could swim *twice* as far as that, yes, and more than twice that far. I

could swim 'round that little point of land that comes out into the water over there, and back again, and not be the least bit tired!"

"She could!" agreed a small boy who had come up behind them. "I know she could, for I've seen her do it, an' that's more than I can do and I'm a boy, but she's Scotch, so she's tougher."

"Are you tougher, or stronger if you're Scotch? Oh, how I do just *wish* I were Scotch!" Rosalie said promptly.

"So do I," said the boy, "but we boys like girls we have to take care of."

"Why do you?" Rosalie asked in surprise.

"Oh, I don't know exactly, but I think it makes us feel big to take care of girls that aren't as strong as we. The strong girls are good fun to play with, but the ones that

need us,—oh, I don't know how to say it."

He blushed, and looking down, began scraping the wet sand into little hills with his shoe.

Rosalie watched him for a moment, then laying her small hand on his arm, she peeped at his downcast eyes, and asked:

"What is your name? You didn't tell us."

"I'm Berton Russell, but every one calls me 'Bert.' "

"Then I'll call you Bert," Rosalie said, "and does Guarda—Why, where *is* she?"

The boy turned.

"Out there!" he cried, laughing, and pointing to where her head peeped above the water.

"Oh! oh!" cried Rosalie, catching her breath. "Get some one to go out after her! Go quick! *Quick!*"

“No need of that,” the boy replied carelessly, “for look! She’s coming back now. Hurray! See her laughing at us.”

Rosalie stood with tightly clasped hands, and staring eyes, watching Guarda’s coming.

With wonderful speed for so small a girl, she swam straight toward them, then scrambling from the surf, she raced along over the hard, wet sand, waving the dripping stick high above her head as a trophy.

“I brought it back!” she cried, “Not because it was worth saving, but just so you’d know I truly did go out as far as that.”

That was the first of many mornings on the beach, and Rosalie found herself less, and less afraid of the water, with its wildly dancing waves. Now, instead of frightening her, it charmed her.

"Come in and begin to learn to swim," said Guarda. "Come! I'll hold fast to you."

"Not now," said Rosalie. "Some other time."

Bert laughed.

"That's the way I felt, before I learned to swim," he said. "I was never ready when some one wanted to teach me. I'd always promise to begin next day, and when the next day came, I put it off till the next."

"You needn't tease Rosalie," Guarda said. "She isn't afraid. She just thinks she'd rather begin another day, and we'll be glad to help her anytime."

"I didn't mean to tease," Bert said, "I was only honest enough to own that I was afraid, at first, to try to swim, and I was."

Rosalie slipped her hand into his. "I



"I BROUGHT IT BACK!" SHE CRIED.—*Page 37.*

don't mind what you said, I *was* a bit afraid," she said.

"We'll go out just a little way, the first time," said Guarda.

Rosalie smiled, but she did not say anything. She thought it fine to be able to swim, she liked to see Guarda making her way through the waves, but she was content to remain on the shore, at play in the shallow water.

She was hoping that they would not try to coax her to go farther than she dared, so when she saw Aunt Constance coming toward her, she was glad to say "I'll have to go now. I'll see you to-night, Guarda."

"All right," cried Guarda, "and Bert is coming, too."

They were both laughing when she looked back at them.

What was the joke?

There was a letter from Aunt Cynthia, and while much of its contents would not in any way interest Rosalie, there was one page that Aunt Constance knew she would enjoy, so after lunch, she read that part aloud:

“Tell Rosalie that I shall expect to see her here on September, the tenth, and as Stanton’s school does not open until October ten, there will be plenty of time for my small son to become well acquainted with his Cousin Rosalie.”

“Oh, what fun!” cried Rosalie.

Aunt Constance laid the letter on the table, and looked earnestly at the little eager face.

“Rosalie, dear, there is one thing that I think I ought to tell you. You have heard Aunt Cynthia talk a great deal about her small boy, and I think she really believes him to be very sweet-tempered.

“Rosalie, dear, you must try to be patient with Stanton if you are to please Aunt Cynthia, and enjoy the winter there.

“Stanton will be at home when we reach there, and in a month will go off to private school.”

“Truly I’ll be patient,” Rosalie promised, “but just what is he likely to do?”

“Almost anything that occurs to him,” said Uncle Bruce, who had just entered.

Rosalie was silent for a moment, then she said:

“Aunt Constance says I’ll have to be patient, and you say he’s likely to do almost anything that he thinks of. Now, Uncle Bruce, I do truly b’lieve Stanton and I will be good friends.”

“I hope you will, dear,” said Uncle Bruce, “and Cynthia, I know, will do all that she can to make your visit pleasant.

Aunt Blanche Davenport wishes you to visit her, and then there is Aunt Lucia Curtis who feels sure that you should come to her for a long visit. Doubtless in each place, there will be things that are different from what you have been accustomed to in our cosy home, but you will find pleasures in the different homes, and I know that each of your aunts will do her best to make you happy."

"And I'll do *my* best," said Rosalie, and she hummed a gay snatch of song as she ran out to the porch.

"Rosalie is so winsome, I sometimes wonder if she will actually shame Stanton into behaving half-way decent," said Aunt Constance.

"Rosalie could do it if any one could," Uncle Bruce replied, "but Stanton seems

like a boy whom not even the greatest kindness could move."

"Well, I am very glad that he is to be away at school during the greater part of the season," said Aunt Constance.

Uncle Bruce laughed softly.

"If I were visiting Cynthia, and I heard that Stanton would not be at home *at all*, my joy would be unbounded."

"Bruce!" cried Aunt Constance.

"Well, the youngster is certainly disagreeable," said Uncle Bruce, "and the less I see of him, the better pleased am I."

Rosalie thought evening would never come, but it did.

Dinner was rather late, and after that the moments flew. Soon they were dressing for the entertainment, and then they slowly strolled along the beach to the hotel "Sea-View."

The first numbers on the program interested the grown-ups, but the boys and girls did not enjoy the lady, who sang up to a very high note, so shrilly that one small boy covered his ears with his hands, nor did they care for the short, and very fat little man, who sang a bass solo with a voice so powerful that it seemed impossible that it could belong to anything less than a giant.

Uncle Bruce pointed to the next number on the program, holding it so that Rosalie could see.

“Oo—o!” she said softly, her brown eyes shining, and her hands tightly clasped.

A tall, broad-shouldered man in Highland costume came out on the stage, and after a glance at the audience, began to play the old familiar melody for the “Fling.”

Rosalie caught her breath when a boy

and girl in Scottish costume came running out together.

“It’s Bert and Guarda!” she whispered, but no one heard her, for every one in the large audience sat closely watching the nimble dancing of the two children.

It was clever work, and the boy and girl danced equally well.

The applause was generous, and Guarda and Bert repeated the dance.

“Oh, Uncle Bruce!” whispered Rosalie when the dancers had raced from the stage: “Weren’t they wonderful? *May* I learn to dance? Will they let me dance to different music? Piano, or violins I like, but the bagpipes sing through their noses.”

“I’ll answer some of those questions when we reach home, dear,” whispered Uncle Bruce, smiling.

“Will they dance again?” Rosalie asked,

and Uncle Bruce once more pointed to the program, but this time his forefinger touched a line on the second part.

“Spanish Dance. Guarda McLean and Berton Russell,” she read.

Rosalie leaned back in her seat, and studied the frescoed ceiling.

The painted garlands of roses up there where the lights were shining looked far more interesting than the stout man on the platform who was thanking the people for their attendance, and telling them how very glad he was to be present.

Next to appear were two very slender girls, who played a piano duet, then another song rendered by the soprano, and another bass solo by the little fat man.

Rosalie wondered how many times they were to sing.

She was counting the roses in the garland on the ceiling just above the stage.

“Three pink ones, next two red ones, then three more pink ones, and—” she stopped whispering and sat upright.

A pretty girl at the piano was playing the first measures of a Spanish waltz, and somewhere, just out of sight, tamborines were tinkling, “*Ting-ting! Ting-ting!*”

“They’re coming!” she whispered, leaning forward.

What fine little Spanish people they seemed to be, in their bright, gaudy costumes! How graceful their movements, how clever their steps!

Uncle Bruce turned to look at Rosalie.

Her lips were parted, and her eyes were sparkling, as she leaned eagerly forward, watching every step.

“If it will add to her happiness this

winter, she shall surely learn to dance," he thought, and under his breath he whispered, "She'll need something to offset living in the same house with Stanton."

Then he remembered that Stanton was to be at school nearly all the time, and he sighed with genuine relief.

There were several numbers yet to be enjoyed, but it was quite late enough for Rosalie, Aunt Constance thought, so they quietly left, going out by the great main doorway.

To Rosalie's great delight, Guarda and Bert soon overtook them.

Guarda's Uncle Bob proved to be as cordial, and kindly a man as Uncle Bruce Travers, and quite as full of fun.

The three children walked along together, chattering all the way.

"You both were just *dear* in the lovely

dances that you did," said Rosalie, "and I don't know which I liked best. Why didn't you tell me that you were to dance, too?" she asked looking up at Bert.

"Oh, I don't know," he answered shyly. "I like to dance, but I don't say much about it, the other boys tease so. They say it's 'sissy' to rig up in costumes and dance, but I don't see why it is, when there are grown-up men that do nothing but dance. I saw one last winter when my father took me to the theatre, who danced wonderfully. He was Signor Garcia, and when I saw what a tall, manly chap he was, I felt if I were sure that I could ever do as well as that, I'd like to be a dancer, no matter what the other boys think, or say."

"I don't believe any one could dance better than you and Guarda did!" Rosalie said, but Guarda and Bert only laughed.

“Oh, but there are people who can do the most *wonderful* dancing,” Guarda said. “We’ve seen them, and we know, but we both mean to study, and maybe some day, we’ll be able to dance like those clever people that we have seen.”

Rosalie was not convinced.

She admired their dancing, and could not imagine any dancer more graceful or clever than Guarda and Bert.

CHAPTER III

AT AUNT CYNTHIA'S

ANOTHER letter from Aunt Cynthia came a few days after the concert, and again it reminded Aunt Constance that Rosalie was to arrive at her home promptly on September tenth.

“Cynthia doesn’t intend that we shall forget the date,” said Uncle Bruce, but he did not laugh as gayly as usual.

He was thinking how soon Rosalie, who was so dear to them, would brighten Aunt Cynthia’s home, and how different their own home would be without her sunny face, her merry laughter.

“We did wisely when we planned to

spend the winter in California," he said to himself, and the same thought passed through Aunt Constance's mind, as she looked up at him.

Rosalie had been with them ever since the time when she, at six months old, had been left an orphan, and they loved her as if she were their own.

Rosalie as truly loved them, but she remembered the winter before, when at Christmas, she had enjoyed so many pleasures at Aunt Cynthia's home, and it seemed to her that a winter spent there would be one glad round of good times.

Every letter that came from Aunt Cynthia increased her eager longing to go there, and at last the day arrived when they were to leave the shore.

Aunt Constance had decided that she could not make the trip. She was very

tired, and it seemed easier to say good-bye to dear little Rosalie at the shore, and let her start from there, with Uncle Bruce, for Aunt Cynthia's home than it would be to see her going out from their own home, to be so long away.

"I'm going to see Cousin Stanton, for the first time!" Rosalie cried, when the steamer was about to start.

"And may he be kind to you," Aunt Constance tried to say, but while her lips moved, not a sound could she utter.

On the way back from the wharf, Aunt Constance stopped her car, to pick up a friend, who tried her best to say something that might cheer Mrs. Travers.

"She is a very dear little girl, but she is not yet eight years old, and being so young, she will doubtless be homesick. Mark my words, Connie, you will have her back

again in less than no time. She was eager to go, all children like changes, but a few days in a new home will be quite enough."

"You are mistaken, Marna," was the quiet reply. "Rosalie loves us dearly, but her parents were fond of travel, and were never so happy as when about to visit some place, or places that were new to them, and Rosalie, I believe inherits the longing for new scenes. The only thing that would make her cut short her visit would be the very possible chance that her Cousin Stanton would be unbearable, but there is not much chance of that, for, unpleasant as the spoiled young rascal is, he will, with the exception of the Christmas and spring vacations, be away at school."

"You'll have less care," ventured her friend, but Aunt Constance replied, "I'd

be far happier with the care, and enjoying Rosalie's companionship."

It was a long trip, this time, part way by boat, and the remainder of the journey by train, instead of all the way by rail as before.

It was late Thursday afternoon when they arrived at the Gifford home, a handsome house that Rosalie well remembered.

Uncle Stanton and Aunt Cynthia were eagerly watching for the arrival of their guests, while Stanton, Junior waited, anything but eagerly in an upper room, a frown upon his face.

Uncle Stanton spoke to the manservant who was passing through the hall.

"Go upstairs, Blanford, and tell Master Stanton to come down to greet his Cousin Rosalie," he said.

When Blanford returned, he paused beside Mr. Gifford's chair.

"I gave Master Stanton your message, and he said as how there was no hurry, but he'd be down when Miss Rosalie came."

"I'm sure of that," Uncle Stanton replied, "because I told him if he didn't appear promptly I should come upstairs after him."

"Yes, sir, very good, sir," the man replied, but his eyes twinkled as he left the room.

He was a sturdy Englishman, but he could see the amusing side of any situation, and just now was wondering what sort of welcome young Stanton intended giving his cousin, when she arrived.

He decided to watch, if possible.

"I wonder if his father can make him

mind his manners?" he thought, as he went down the hall.

For a few moments Aunt Cynthia sat silently watching her husband, while Uncle Stanton, leaning back in his chair, listened attentively for two sounds, one of approaching wheels that would bring Rosalie, the other of his boy's footsteps on the stairs. The second of these sounds he hardly expected to hear. It seemed far more likely that he would be obliged to go in search of Stanton if the boy were to appear.

Sullen he surely was, and obstinate as well.

A second later Aunt Cynthia leaned forward, and listened.

"She has come, I do believe!" she cried, and then light footsteps bounded up the steps, followed by a firmer tread, Blan-

ford opened the great door, and Rosalie rushed in to be caught in Aunt Cynthia's arms, then welcomed by her Uncle Stanton, and then genial Uncle Bruce came in for his share of the hearty greetings.

A sound on the stairway made them all look up.

Looking neither toward the newly arrived guests, nor toward his father, who stood at the foot of the stairs waiting for him, young Stanton Gifford came down to the lower hall, because he dared not do otherwise.

"This is your Cousin Rosalie," his father said, leading him forward, with a firm hand on his shoulder.

Rosalie, her brown eyes shining, moved eagerly toward Stanton, her hands extended.

"I've so wanted to know you," she said,

and then caught her breath, and drew back.

“Oh, Stanton!” she cried, “Aren’t you glad I’ve come?”

Half ashamed, he took one of her eager hands, muttered something so low that no one understood what he said, and then moved toward his mother, of whose approval he felt quite sure.

“Stanton is so bashful,” Aunt Cynthia hastened to say to cover an awkward pause.

The boy and girl looked at each other, while the older people talked, but Uncle Bruce seemed not to notice what was being said, so closely was he watching young Stanton.

The boy looked up, and flinched at the clear eyes gazing at him.

His mother thought him wonderful. Was

it possible that tall, handsome Uncle Bruce did not admire him?

The boy smiled as if to disarm Uncle Bruce, but the cool, clear eyes regarding Stanton so sternly did not appear to relent.

Dinner was served almost immediately. Stanton, sitting beside his father, and Rosalie, beside Aunt Cynthia, looked across the broad table. Stanton glowered and Rosalie looked puzzled as their glances met.

Beautiful pink and crimson roses were massed in a tall Dresden jar in the center of the table. Handles, formed by large open scrolls, stood out on each side, the opening in each as wide as a fair-sized saucer.

Twice Stanton looked up from his plate, and through the handle of the vase, saw

that Rosalie was very soberly looking at him.

A third time he peeped at her, and then, —he made an outrageous face!

Rosalie giggled.

Dear little Rosalie, never dreaming that an ugly impulse prompted the grimace, saw only the drolly skewed features, and thought that he meant to cure her soberness by doing something that would make her laugh.

“Oh, I’m sorry!” gasped Rosalie, “I didn’t mean to laugh right out loud at the table, but Stanton was *so* funny! I never saw a boy make such a comic face!”

Stanton flushed crimson.

His mother had seen it all, and knew only too well, the meanness that caused the act.

His father had not seen the grimace, but

he understood his small son, and said only:

“I’ll see you in the library after dinner, Stanton.”

“Yes, sir,” Stanton replied, just above a whisper.

He was far from eager to hear what his father had to say.

He did not look up at Rosalie again, but devoted his attention wholly to his dinner.

Once only he spoke.

When the dessert was served, he looked up, saw that it was raspberry sherbet with the fresh fruit frozen in it, and remarked:

“Aw, pshaw! Why did you have sherbet? You know I like ice-cream better. I’ll not eat that!”

“Now, Stanton dear,” said his mother, “Would you like some—”

“Pardon me, Cynthia, but the dessert

will not be changed for our son. It is quite unnecessary."

Then conversation became general, Uncle Stanton, Uncle Bruce, and Aunt Cynthia talking of old friends whom they all knew, and before they left the table, Stanton had decided to eat his sherbet.

They were going for a drive through the park, and then return in time for the guests to retire early, and be thoroughly rested for the morrow.

No one knew what Uncle Stanton said to his small son, when they met after dinner in the library, but when a telephone message invited Stanton to be one of nine at a local ball game, his father readily gave his consent.

It may be that he thought the ride would be pleasanter for Rosalie, if Stanton were

not there to say unkind things, or to be sullen and silent.

Rosalie sat close beside her Aunt Cynthia, and often when they were bowling along a broad avenue, she glanced up at the handsome face, as if trying to guess if Aunt Cynthia was at all like dear Aunt Constance, or dreaming what it would be like to be with Aunt Cynthia all winter.

The next morning dawned bright and sunny.

Stanton declared it necessary for him to join the ball players again for practice, but Rosalie gave no thought to that, because Uncle Bruce was leaving early, and she had so many things that he must be sure to tell Aunt Constance that she did not miss Stanton at all.

Just when Uncle Bruce had gone, Lillian Glynn came racing over to see Rosalie, and

to invite her to enjoy the Saturday matinee in a box at the theatre with two other little girls, and Mrs. Glynn and Aunt Cynthia.

The play was one that children would enjoy, arranged from the old fairy tale, "Snow-white and the Elves."

So fine the scenery, so wonderful the dancing, so brilliant the lights, so sweet the music that Rosalie was enchanted, and when, as they were leaving the theatre, she heard Mrs. Glynn telling Aunt Cynthia how much finer the play had been as shown by another company, she wondered how that could be.

"I b'lieve it's nice to be little, and like things just as they *are!*" Rosalie whispered, "and when I grow up, I mean to like things *then!*"

Later that night at dinner, she told Uncle

Stanton about the play, and how glad she was that it seemed perfect to her.

“Mrs. Glynn said she saw another company play it, and it was finer than it was this afternoon, but I don’t see how it *could* be lovelier than it was to-day.”

“You like *everything!*” growled Stanton.

“I *like* to like things! I *mean* to like things! It’s more fun,” said Rosalie.

“You are right, Rosalie,” said Uncle Stanton, “and if you stick to your intention, you are sure to be contented and happy.”

Stanton frowned, and to change the subject, asked:

“How soon does my school begin?”

“Two weeks from to-day,” replied Aunt Cynthia, expecting that, as usual he would coax to be one week late at school.

“Gee! Only two weeks, and then I’ll be with the boys again!”

Rosalie’s cheeks flushed. She could not help seeing that Stanton was eager to get away.

He had found something now about which he was interested to talk, and with flashing eyes he related happenings at school, where, if his stories were true, he was always the hero.

Aunt Cynthia leaned forward, eagerly listening to every word that Stanton uttered, but Uncle Stanton, sat quietly studying the boy’s face, and Rosalie wondered why he looked less interested than Aunt Cynthia.

Stanton remained in the house as little as possible.

Aunt Cynthia saw a troubled look in

Rosalie's brown eyes, and knew that Stanton's lack of interest hurt.

"You mustn't mind, dear, if Stanton seems to like best to be outdoors with his boy friends."

"Oh, it doesn't matter—that is, not *very* much, Aunt Cynthia," Rosalie replied, but her red lips quivered, and her voice was not steady.

"I think you are grieved, dear; but you see, Stanton has always been very shy, and he goes out, I think, so that we'll not notice it."

"He doesn't act shy," Rosalie said in a low voice, "but—oh, it may be that he is."

Dear little Rosalie! She longed to find an excuse for her cousin. She knew that he was rude, and unkind, and yet—if it were true that he was shy—well, she would, at least, feel that he did not dislike her.

Aunt Cynthia spoke gently. In her heart was a warm glow of stronger love for the little girl who, although unkindly treated, would strive to accept an excuse for her spoiled cousin.

“Stanton isn't shy with every one, but he has always been shy, *exceedingly* shy, with girls,” she said, and Rosalie's eyes brightened.

“Oh, then it isn't just I, it's any girl, all girls!” she cried.

That made his dislike more general, and so the hurt was not quite so keen.

“If I'd been a boy cousin, you think he would have stayed in some of the time?” Rosalie asked.

“Oh, yes,” said Aunt Cynthia, “or else taken you out with him.”

“Well, I don't wish I'd been a boy,” said

Rosalie, "because I like to be a girl, and I like to be a girl—oh, just *because*."

Aunt Cynthia laughed, and Rosalie's rippling laughter seemed a musical echo.

Both felt lighter-hearted, and Rosalie ran off to write a letter to Uncle Bruce.

Once in the letter she spoke of Stanton. Usually she wrote as people write of a person who is sick:

"I'm having a lovely time with all the new boys and girls. Lillian Glynn is the dearest girl, and her brother, Merwin, is jolly. Stanton is about the same as he has been ever since I came here."

"I wonder what Rosalie means, by 'Just about the same,' " Aunt Constance said one evening, after a letter.

"She doubtless means 'just about as disagreeable,' " said Uncle Bruce.

CHAPTER IV

A SURPRISE

ROSALIE was enjoying her visit. Lillian was a loving little friend and playmate, her brother, Merwin, was full of fun, a manly boy who, unlike Stanton, believed girls to be well worth knowing, and there were a number of other boys and girls who plainly showed their friendship for Rosalie.

Her name was already on the list of pupils at Mordaunt Manor, a fine private school, on the same street, and but a short distance from the Gifford home.

The following Monday would be the first day of school at the "Manor," and at the

far-distant school for boys that Stanton attended.

Stanton would be obliged to leave home on Friday afternoon, in order to report at the school on Monday.

He was very eager to start, and when Friday came, he arose early, and at breakfast declared that all his belongings were packed.

"This is the first time that you have packed without help, and it is also the first time that you have been ready to start for school without urging," said Uncle Stanton.

Stanton made no reply. He glanced towards Rosalie, but she was not looking, and he could not guess whether she had heard his words or not.

Aunt Cynthia had lunch served an hour earlier than usual, so that Stanton might

enjoy one more meal at home. He ate but little, however, preferring, he said, to have a feast of his own choosing on the train, and when the car rolled up to the porch, he snatched a suit-case, and raced towards the door, Aunt Cynthia closely following, crying:

“Stanton! Stanton, dear, you *can't* go without saying a word to us.”

“Aw, well—good-bye, all,” he said turning quickly, and bolting towards the open door of the car.

He was in and seated, and bowling along the road to the station before Aunt Cynthia had caught her breath.

Rosalie gasped, and then turned wide, wondering eyes towards Uncle Stanton, who had placed his arm around his wife's shoulders, and was gently leading her towards the house.

Rosalie followed, longing in some way to comfort them, yet afraid to say a word, lest she might say the wrong thing.

They seemed not to realize that she was there, as they walked along the hall to the library, where the heavy portierès closed behind them when they had passed through the doorway.

Rosalie stood for a moment hesitating, then she turned and went quietly up the stairway to her room, where she sat down upon the bed to think.

After a moment she said softly to herself:

“What a way to say good-bye!” to which a maid who had entered replied:

“That’s what I say, Miss Rosalie, an’ him an only child!”

“Does he always go like that?” Rosalie asked.

“Well, no—not exactly,” the maid replied, “but pretty near like that, that is, he seems ter know a lot of ways of bein’ dis’greeable.”

“Oh, I’ve tried, and tried to think he didn’t mean to hurt Aunt Cynthia, but it seems as if he must know he doesn’t make her feel very cheerful when he races off to school like that!”

“Mark my words, Miss Rosalie, Master Stanton don’t never try to please no one but himself.”

Rosalie looked up at the maid, but she said nothing. She knew that the maid spoke truthfully.

She took a book of fairy tales over to the broad, cushioned window-seat, and so charming were the stories that she read on and on until dinner time.

Uncle Stanton seemed quite himself, and

while Aunt Cynthia's eyes plainly showed that she had been crying, she managed to smile, and tried in every way to appear cheerful.

Uncle Stanton told stories of his own boyhood days, and Rosalie enjoyed them, but Aunt Cynthia's eyes held a far-away look, and Rosalie knew that she was thinking of Stanton.

The first weeks at Mordaunt Manor were full of happenings, and while all the boys and girls enjoyed it, Rosalie appeared to be the happiest of all.

There was absolute order, but at the same time, a lack of the stern restraint common in many schools. Pupils were permitted to sit in any position that would look well in one's living-room, and they were also allowed to help each other in preparing lessons, if they remembered to

talk so quietly that others would not be disturbed.

Rosalie wrote to Aunt Constance, telling her that no other school could be so delightful, and the little letter closed with love, and a postscript.

“Stanton went back to school three weeks ago,” it said, but there was no added word of regret.

When the fourth week brought no letter from Stanton, Rosalie saw that Aunt Cynthia was very anxious. Uncle Stanton looked rather nervous, too, and every morning glanced at letters that had arrived, as if he were looking for some especial letter that was delayed.

One afternoon Rosalie brought her books home from school, and settled herself comfortably in a cushioned chair to prepare lessons for the next day.

Aunt Cynthia was at one of the numerous clubs of which she was an active member, and there was not a sound in the house save the ticking of the gilded clock on the mantel.

Rosalie was just wishing that the great house was not so silent, when something snapped against the window.

She sat up in the chair and stared about her.

Had she really heard something or was she dreaming?

Again the sharp sound like hail against the window, made her start.

She sprang to her feet, her books fell upon the rug, and for a second she paused, then she ran to the library window.

There, crouching behind the hedge, was a boy who stared at her, as if wondering what she intended to do.

His cap was pulled well down over his eyes, but there was no mistaking him,—it was Stanton.

He made no effort to approach the house, but made signs for her to go around to the side door.

Rosalie knew that he did not go to the front door, because Blanford would answer the bell, and it was evident that Stanton did not wish the manservant to see him.

Softly she crept to the side door, and as softly opened it.

Stanton who was impatiently waiting, rushed past her, and up the stairs, beckoning her to follow.

Rosalie followed, wondering why he now wished her to follow him, and what had sent him home.

He had never wanted her near him, and

as to this home-coming he was not supposed to return until the Holidays.

When she reached the upper hall, he drew her into a shadowy corner, and began to talk rapidly in a hoarse whisper.

“ ’S no use to ask questions, ’cause you’re a girl an’ wouldn’t understand, but I been ‘picked upon,’ that’s all. The teachers don’t any of ’em like me, and the principal, Mr. Corliss, has sent me home, for just no reason at all. I could patch it up with Mother, but I’m ’fraid Father’ll be angry. You get ’round Father some way, you know well ’nough you can, an’ make him,—well, sort o’ willing to see me. You’ll *have* to, Rosalie, or I’ll run away!”

“Oh, don’t do that!” whispered Rosalie, with fear in her eyes, “I’ll do all I can. I will *truly*! But Stanton, there must have been *some* reason why you—”

“Now, you just stop asking questions, and do what I say,” was the surly reply.

“Uncle Stanton is coming home early to-night,” whispered Rosalie, “and I’ll try to coax him.”

“Well, don’t ask him right out first thing. Just say,—oh, I don’t know just what to tell you to say, but you’re a girl and you ought to know how to get him to listen, and, say! I’m hungry!”

“You’ll come down to dinner, won’t you?” Rosalie asked.

“I won’t unless you get it fixed first,” Stanton said stoutly.

“I say, Rosalie! I’m going to stay in my room, and can’t you get a bite for me?”

“I’ll try,” she promised, and ran downstairs, and into the dining-room, but there she paused.

She had rarely seen the cook, but she had

heard one of the maids telling the butler that the cook had a hasty temper, so she did not dare to try to find her. On the sideboard was a fine dish of fruit.

Hastily snatching a bunch of grapes, a large orange, and two bananas, she hid them in her skirt, clutched its hem firmly, and rushed up the stairs.

She was not a moment too soon, for as she ran into Stanton's room, and tossed them on the bed, she heard some one coming up the stairway.

It was only one of the maids, but Stanton and Rosalie held their breath until she had ascended the second flight of stairs to her own room.

Then Stanton, without a word of thanks began greedily to eat the fruit. Once he paused long enough to say, "I wish you'd brought some cake."

“But I wouldn’t know where to look for it, and I’ve never asked the servants for anything since I came here. They’d be sure to ask questions, and you wouldn’t want me to say you were here, and that I was getting things for you.”

“Well, I guess *not!*” whispered Stanton.

A moment after they both started when they heard the great hall door open and close.

Rosalie crept toward the door and listened.

“It’s Uncle Stanton,” she whispered. “I’ll go down, and I’ll do my best to fix things for you.”

Stanton nodded, and she slipped out, closing the door softly.

Stanton felt no shame in asking help from Rosalie whom he had treated so unkindly, and dear little Rosalie had never a

thought, save that of a longing to smooth the way for Stanton.

She found Uncle Stanton in his big chair in the library, and she perched on the arm, as she often sat on the wide arm of Uncle Bruce's chair.

Uncle Stanton's face brightened. "Why, this is fine!" he said. "I thought you were out with Cynthia, and I should be quite alone until you both returned."

"You don't like to be alone?" said Rosalie, leaning against his shoulder, her soft curls touching his cheek.

"Not if I can have a fine little comrade like you, dear," he said gently.

"But you'd rather have *any* one for company, than be alone, wouldn't you?" she asked, tipping her head so that she might peep into his eyes.

"Well, no," he said laughing. "I'd

rather be alone than endure some people I've seen."

She drew back, and looked at him so fixedly that he asked:

"Why, Puss, how sober you look. Are you dismayed? Did you think I'd like the company of a wild Indian, a crazy Chinaman, or a Whirling Dervish, better than to wait alone until my wife and a dear little girl might return?"

Instead of answering his laughing question, she asked another.

"I don't mean ever to be naughty, Uncle Stanton, but if I happened,—yes, just *happened* to vex you, you'd forgive me, *wouldn't* you?"

"I surely would, Rosalie," was the firm reply.

"Well, then,—when Stanton was here, he was some naughty, but you've forgiven him

by this time, haven't you?" she coaxed.

He hesitated, and she clasped her arms about his neck.

"You'd forgive *me*," she said gently, "and he is your own boy. You *have*, you know you have forgiven him. Say, 'Yes,' please do," and she kissed his cheek.

"Yes," Uncle Stanton said in a low voice, and Rosalie held him closer.

"Tell me you'd be glad to *see* him," she pleaded.

"Yes," Uncle Stanton said, hardly above a whisper.

"Well, then, wait just a minute," she cried, as she sprang from the arm of his chair, and ran towards the stairs.

"Rosalie, where are you going? What does this mean?"

"I'll tell you in a minute!" she cried and

raced up the stairs, looking over the baluster to smile at him.

Uncle Stanton rose from his chair, and stood looking toward the stairway.

A door opened, and then a rather shame-faced boy, holding fast to Rosalie's hand came down the stairs, looking neither to the right nor to the left.

"Here he is, and you're *glad* to see him, you *said* so!" declared Rosalie.

"I should hope that I would be glad to see my boy, at any time, but why—" Uncle Stanton did not finish the sentence, for Rosalie held up a small finger.

"You're sorry you've been naughty, Stanton, you *know* you are, whether you say so or not, and you told me you meant to do better."

"I do mean to be—decent—if I have a chance to," said young Stanton softly.

“Well, that’s half the battle, ‘if we mean right,’ my boy, and now let’s enjoy our dinner, and this evening, and to-morrow we’ll hear all about your home-coming.”

Before Stanton could reply his mother came in.

“Oh, Stanton dear, were you taken ill so that they sent you home?” she cried.

“We are glad to see Stanton, and we do not yet know why he has returned, so I propose that we enjoy dinner and an evening at home, and to-morrow we’ll consider the cause of his sudden return,” said Uncle Stanton.

Aunt Cynthia was puzzled, but as she never liked to have Stanton questioned, she cheerfully agreed to wait until the next day for an explanation.

“It is a half-hour before dinner, and I ought to go over to Lillian’s house. She

lent me a book, and I said I'd bring it back to-night. May I go? I'll not stay," Rosalie asked.

Aunt Cynthia smiled assent, and then, as she turned towards the window she exclaimed:

"Why, Rosalie, there's a shower coming. Already a few raindrops are falling."

"Rosalie must keep her promise and return the book. Stanton can walk over with her and carry the umbrella," Uncle Stanton said.

"Aw, Father! I can't walk out with a *girl*! The fellows I know will tease," cried Stanton.

"Stanton! Rosalie was a true little friend to you to-day, and this is your first chance to show that you are grateful. Do you want to look thankless?"

His father's voice was stern, and without

waiting to be urged, Stanton took his cap from his pocket into which he had crammed it, and with a hasty "Come along, Rosalie," he snatched an umbrella from the hall-stand, and the two went out together.

Stanton was unwilling to go, but he dared not refuse.

He tramped along beside Rosalie. Sometimes the umbrella shielded her from the raindrops, and at other times it did not, but that did not worry Stanton.

When they reached Lillian's home, he refused to enter, and when Lillian urged Rosalie to "Come in for just a minute," he told her not to "stay all day!" and sullenly waited on the porch.

When they returned, dinner passed off pleasantly, and Uncle Stanton, realizing that his small son was not inclined to help entertain Rosalie, decided to take his little



SOMETIMES THE UMBRELLA SHIELDED HER FROM THE RAINDROPS.
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party to the theatre, and so make it a pleasant evening for all.

The play was charming, but all through the evening Stanton kept wondering whether his father intended sternly to demand all the particulars of his hasty return from school, or if, instead, he was to escape with but little questioning.

There was one thing that the boy had not thought of, and that was what happened next morning.

For some reason the mail was delayed, so that it arrived after breakfast, but just before Uncle Stanton had left the house. Among the letters, lay an envelope on the upper left corner of which was the name of the school that Stanton had just left.

The letters were large, and printed on a red shield, and Stanton recognized that shield.

“I’m not especially hurried this morning so I’ll just look through these letters,” said Uncle Stanton, and he took up the one bearing the red shield.

Stanton wriggled from his chair, and was cautiously gliding toward the door, when his father looked up.

“Just a moment, Stanton,” he said, and Stanton stopped.

“Wait a moment, Cynthia,” said Uncle Stanton, “and you, too, Rosalie,” and then he read the letter aloud. It opened with a few stilted phrases, declaring the principal’s friendly feeling toward all of his pupils, and stating that he held no unkind feeling for Stanton, Junior, but that he could not in justice to other students, permit such as he to remain a pupil of the school.

“He is constantly planning mischief,

into which he seeks to, and often succeeds in, dragging others. He sets an example of disobedience, and boasts of his ability to break rules, and avoid punishment. For this reason I am sending him home, and I must ask you to refrain from urging me to permit him to return."

"Well, Stanton, do you expect me to be proud of you?" Uncle Stanton asked.

Stanton hung his head, shifted from one foot to the other, and muttered something about not having had a fair chance, while his mother with tears in her eyes declared that Stanton had been abused.

"Cynthia, we must not make excuses for Stanton, for if we do, we shall be encouraging him in doing as he has been doing. I don't intend to do that, and I don't believe you do. We love our boy, and we will do what is best for him.

“As he is a nuisance at private school, we must see what the public school can do for him. Next Monday he will enter the Grafton School. It is in this district, and its principal is a good man, a just man, whom I admire.”

CHAPTER V

ONLY A GIRL

ROSALIE enjoyed school. Stanton did not. Rosalie studied her lessons, while Stanton refused even to try to learn.

He had boasted of the wonderful private school that he was attending, of its military drill, its riding lessons, oh, he had talked of that school until the other boys were tired of listening, and now he found it difficult to convince those same boys that he really preferred the public school. He tried to assure them that he needed no further training in military tactics, and he was very angry when they laughed.

He was now nearly ten years old, while

Rosalie would soon be eight, yet he was no farther advanced in his school work than she.

There was one thing which he considered a grievance, and that was that while the private school which Rosalie attended had but one session, he was obliged to attend two sessions at the public school.

“*Twice* a day!” he muttered one day after lunch. “Once a day is more than enough at that old school!”

“If you had studied, instead of idling away your time planning mischief, you might still be a pupil at that school from which you were sent home,” said his father, “and I’ve one thing more to say, and that is that if you care for my approval, you will at least try to win and hold a good record at school. You like to have other pupils think that you prefer to play, and *some*

will believe that, but many more will think that you can not learn."

"Aw, pshaw! I can learn anything if I want to!" boasted Stanton.

"You have to prove that," his father said quietly.

That was a view of the matter that Stanton had not thought of. He thought himself very smart, but was it possible that others would doubt that?

Just before two o'clock, Rosalie came in from school. Her eyes were bright, her cheeks rosy, and her lips parted in a happy smile. She had enjoyed the forenoon at school, and Lillian had walked home with her.

"Come over to my house as soon as your lessons are prepared for to-morrow," she had urged, and Rosalie had replied, "I will if I can."

She had been careful not to promise surely to be there, because sometimes Aunt Cynthia wished her to accompany her on a long afternoon drive.

Aunt Cynthia was, however, going to an important club meeting, and Rosalie went to the library to busy herself with "home work."

She was nearly ready to go over to Lillian's, and trying to complete what she had still to do, when Stanton rushed in, dropped his books and turned to rush out again.

"Where you going?" Rosalie asked.

"Out to play!" he shouted, "and wish I'd got out earlier. I've just stayed after school for nothing this afternoon. I haven't done the old lessons, and I *can't!*"

He grasped the knob of the great door, and was about to rush out, when Rosalie caught hold of his arm.

“Don’t go out!” she cried. “Stay in and I’ll help you.”

“*You!*” he said rudely. “If I can’t do ’em, how could *you*, just a *girl!*”

“Maybe I can’t,” Rosalie said gently, “but I’d be so glad to *try*.”

Stanton paused, and looked at her. He had spoken rudely, yet she had not been vexed. She had only repeated her offer to help him. How many of his friends would have been as kind?

“What’s the use trying?” he said, but she knew that he was half inclined to accept her aid.

“What’s the use?” Rosalie repeated. “If I *do* help with your lessons you’ll go off to school to-morrow morning ready to recite, instead of being scolded, and if we, just *you* and *I*, could keep that up for

a month, you'd have a fine report card to bring home to Uncle Stanton."

A moment longer he waited, then he said sullenly, "All right, but I guess my lessons are 'way ahead of what you're having. You're 'most two years younger'n me."

He found, however, when he and his small cousin sat by the library table, his work spread out before them, that she could and did help him, because, although so much younger than he, she was doing school work in advance of that which had so puzzled him.

At last his lessons were all prepared for the morrow.

Stanton was too stubborn to thank Rosalie for the help that she had given him, but he asked a question that had been puzzling him:

"What made you stay in this afternoon?"

I heard Lill ask you to go over to her house."

"I stayed in to help you," Rosalie said, quietly.

Stanton made no answer, but he did what, for him, was quite a wonderful thing.

"Come out in the living-room, and try a new game," he said. "I had it at Christmas, but I've never shown it to you."

She ran along beside him, and Stanton found the box and explained how the game was to be played.

Rosalie was quick to learn, and soon they were quite excited over it, each earnestly trying to beat the other.

Uncle Stanton coming in a little early, peeped in at the two eager players.

"Well, well! I wonder what restored peace? For some reason my small son is

acting like a little gentleman," he whispered.

He thought it best, however, to make no comment, so he went on to the library as if he had not seen the two busy players.

He sat down in his great leather-cushioned chair, and tried to read, but often he glanced towards the living-room, and although from where he sat, he could not see the players, he could hear their voices, and once in a while a jolly laugh from Stanton, followed by a rippling echo from Rosalie.

"If it will only last!" thought Uncle Stanton.

When Aunt Cynthia came in, she peeped into the living-room.

"Your turn next!" Stanton said.

"I know it," Rosalie replied, "and I push my red checker three points."

Aunt Cynthia turned toward the library.

“Have you seen the children?” she asked in a whisper.

“Yes, and I hope it will last,” Uncle Stanton replied.

“It must be that Rosalie is just beginning to appreciate Stanton,” said Aunt Cynthia.

“More likely she is beginning to understand him,” Uncle Stanton said, to which his wife made no reply.

It required much coaxing, but Rosalie succeeded in helping him with his lessons so that the report-card that he brought home greatly pleased Uncle Stanton, and really, Stanton himself felt a little sense of pride in his scholarship.

“Guess I can beat a few of the fellows that think they know it all!” he said.

“The fact of ‘beating’ the other pupils

is not so important, as the fact that you have gained a bit of knowledge this month," Uncle Stanton said.

"Let me help you right along?" whispered Rosalie, when they met in the hall, and Stanton nodded.

It was provoking to admit that a girl, a *little* girl, could help him, but she had proved that she could, and he surely needed her help, so he agreed. He was glad to be helped. It was easier than helping himself.

He was not stupid, but he had never tried to learn, passing school hours in an endeavor to have what he termed "A good time," and appearing at recitations without so much as a thought of the day's lessons.

He now was nearing the head of his class, and he meant to hold that place.

Rosalie has stirred his pride, and Uncle Stanton was delighted.

Her playmates wondered why she gave so much time to helping Stanton. They knew that he had been unpleasant.

It was natural to Rosalie to like to be helpful, and it was not so much for Stanton's sake as for Uncle Stanton and dear Aunt Cynthia that she had coaxed the stubborn boy to accept her aid. It was now October, and the bright blue sky peeped through the golden yellow of the leaves.

On her way to school one day, Rosalie overheard what was being said by a group of boys who were in the garden of a fine, large house. The wall was high and so she could not see them.

“Ma is trying to send me to dancing-school, Sat'day afternoons, but I don't

want to go. What do I want to be seen dancing around with the girls for, I'd like to know," said one.

"Oh, I don't know," said another with a chuckling laugh. "Maybe she'd doll you up in a velvet suit, and buy you a big collar."

"Be *still!*" cried the first voice. "Didn't I say I'd not go?"

"You did *not*," was the teasing reply. "You said, '*Why* would I want to?' or something like that."

"I'll bet Stanton will have to go, so he can take Cousin Rosalie," said another tauntingly.

"I guess *not!*" she heard Stanton declare stoutly. "Ma hasn't said a word about it."

"She will, though. All our mothers are planning to send us, but I don't mean to

go. I don't want to be called a sissy," said another boy.

Rosalie hurried along, but the boys coming out on the side walk knew that she must have heard.

For just a second her eyes met Stanton's, and while her cheeks were flushed, his grew redder still. It was true that he did not wish to attend dancing-school, but he wished that she had not heard. It looked a bit mean to accept gladly her aid with his lessons every day, and then to have her hear him boldly declare that he would not go with her. Of course, he had not said just that, but he knew that he had meant that, and he also knew that she was hurt.

"I say—Rosalie, wait a minute!" he called after her.

She turned, tried to smile, and then hurried on her way to school.

She was busy all the forenoon, and forgot Stanton's unpleasant speech, but at recess one of the pupils spoke of the dancing-class, and several said that they were to join it.

"You'll be there, Rosalie, won't you?" said one, and another cried, "Of course she will."

"I don't know," Rosalie said, her cheeks very pink.

"Why, Rosalie Dare! It won't be any fun at all if you are not with us, and nearly every pupil in this school will be there!" cried Lillian Glynn.

"Aunt Cynthia hasn't spoken of it," Rosalie said, looking down at her shoe.

"Not to you, perhaps," said Hilda Trent, "but at the club meeting, a few days ago your aunt was talking with my mother and Mrs. Glynn and a few other ladies, and she

said that you and Stanton would join the class.”

Rosalie said nothing. She thought of Guarda and Bert dancing so cleverly, and she knew that she would enjoy the lessons, but if Stanton were forced to go, and went because he dared not refuse, how unpleasant it would be.

When they returned to the class-rooms, she soon was so busy trying, for the first time, to draw a map, that she soon forgot all about Stanton.

Stanton, could not forget how the other boys had teased him, and when at recess, they began again to annoy him, he shouted angrily:

“Oh, can’t you fellows think of anything else to talk about!” but he did not again say that he would not go to dancing-school,

because he knew if his father wished him to do so, he could not refuse.

Stanton was not a bad boy, but he had been spoiled, and never curbed, nor rebuked when he had done or said that which might hurt another. Dear little Rosalie was doing more to make him ashamed of his rudeness than had ever been done before.

He thought of the many afternoons when she had helped him with lessons that he was too lazy to prepare unaided, and then, like a flash, he remembered the look in her eyes, when he and the boys with whom he had been talking, had come out of that garden just as she was going by.

She had not looked grieved. Instead, she had looked as if she had thought him rather mean.

“I don’t care what she thinks!” he whispered sullenly, but he knew that that was

not true. He was ashamed. He did not like girls *anywhere*, but to have one in his home—he still resented that!

He felt sure that girls were of no importance, yet, little as Rosalie was, he wished that she had not had a chance to think him mean.

Well, there was one thing that he could do. If she could think so badly of him, she needn't help him with his lessons. He didn't like girls, anyway, and he would get on without any help!

Such were Stanton's thoughts, but when after school, he sat down to do his "home work," he found himself less smart than he had thought. For some reason the problems refused to come out right.

Again and again he tried, becoming more and more impatient, until, at last in rage, he flung his book on the floor.

Rosalie had gone for lunch at Lillian's, had stayed a while to play, and reached home just in time to hear Stanton's book strike the floor.

She looked into the library, and saw that he was angry, and guessed the reason.

She left her coat and hat in the hall, and went quietly into the library.

"Let's do the problems together," she said.

"You don't have to help me just 'cause you've *been* helping me!" he said bluntly.

"I know I don't *have* to, but I'd like to," she said quietly.

She picked up the book, took it to the table, and with pencil and paper, was soon at work.

For a few moments Stanton watched her, feeling rather ashamed, then he sidled into

the chair beside her, and soon he was closely following her busy pencil.

“There!” she cried a moment later. “That’s the hardest one, so now we can surely do the others.”

“Why did you say *we*?” Stanton asked, curiously. “*We* didn’t do it. *You* did it.”

Rosalie turned to look at him, then she looked down.

“I thought *we* sounded better,” she said, and Stanton after a pause said, “Let me try the others.”

In his heart he was thinking that she was generous and kind to help him, but he would not say so.

With much aid from Rosalie, he managed to prepare his lessons for the next day, and while they worked together he thought how rudely he had spoken in the

morning. He wondered why she helped him, and after a while he spoke.

“What makes you help me?” he asked, adding; “I wouldn’t ’f I was in your place.”

“Wouldn’t you?” she asked, without interest.

“No,” said Stanton.

“I’d help you, the same as I’d help any one. I like to help,” she said.

Stanton had hoped for a compliment, and was vexed when she said that she would as quickly help any one.

“I wonder you wouldn’t try to help the butler,” he said.

“I would if he wanted me to,” Rosalie said, and she laughed.

She was not laughing at Stanton, but she was amused at the idea that he should think it mattered whom one should help.

Stanton was annoyed, and took no pains to hide it.

The very idea of being laughed at by a girl vexed him, and then, too, he was beginning to realize that his little cousin was, in some way, his superior.

CHAPTER VI

IRIS

THERE was much excitement at Mor-daunt Manor. The pupils were standing in groups before school opened, and all were talking of the party that Mrs. Langly was giving for Iris on the following week. Iris was a favorite.

“It can’t be a large party,” Iris explained, “because our house isn’t large, but Mother says I may invite twenty this time, and a little later in the season, I can have another party, and invite twenty others.”

Every one liked Iris Langly. She was so full of life, so bright and cheery. Her blue

eyes were always twinkling, and her curls were always bobbing, because she could not keep still.

“There will be some fine things to enjoy at my party, but I’m not to tell what they are,” Iris said, just as the bell rang for them to take their seats, and she laughed because there was not so much as a moment left for the boys and girls to tease her, and try to make her tell.

Lillian Glynn and Hilda Trent would be there, and Rosalie, of course, and Lillian’s brother, Merwin, and Charles Winton, and Brant Erling, and—Stanton Gifford would be invited, although no one could guess if he would be there, because it was well known that Stanton did as he chose, but who could say what he would choose to do?

When the invitations arrived, Stanton

promptly said that he did not care to go, because there would be girls there.

“There’s to be a wonderful treat for the girls and boys,” ventured the butler who had heard what Stanton had said.

“How do you know?” Stanton asked.

“Because a man I know is catering for that little party, and he says that spread will be a ‘dream’!”

“Maybe I’ll go,” muttered Stanton, who was rather greedy.

When the night of the party arrived, Stanton had decided to go.

It was a short distance to the Langly house, and as soon as the two children were seated in the car, Stanton hastened to say:

“You get out first, Rosalie, and run up the steps, and when you are in, I’ll get out, and be slow enough getting to the door so

that the boys won't think we came together. They tease so."

Rosalie turned to look at him, as she often did when he spoke rudely, and as usual no anger shone in her soft brown eyes, only a look of surprise that any one should care to be so very unpleasant.

Stanton felt abashed.

The chauffeur opened the door, and Rosalie sprang out, a lovely figure in white with pink rosebuds, and pink satin slippers. Nimbly she ran up the steps, where she was welcomed by the boys and girls already there.

Quickly she ran to where Iris, in blue gauze with iris blooms, stood beside her mother to greet her friends.

A few moments later Stanton entered, and was at once captured by those of the boys who enjoyed his "rough and tumble"

manner of playing outdoor games.

He did not speak to Iris, or her mother who had invited him, because he thought it too much bother.

Rosalie did not miss Stanton because she was having such a fine time that she quite forgot him until Hilda asked:

“Where’s your Cousin Stanton, Rosalie? Didn’t he come?”

“He said he was coming,” said Rosalie, for that was all that she dared to say.

To be sure, he had ridden over with her, but she had not seen him come in. How could she know that some sudden impulse had not made him turn and go home?

“There he is over in that corner, with three other boys,” said Merwin Glynn.

Mrs. Langly had engaged fine entertainers, and soon the children were laughing with delight at the jugglers, and magicians



NIMBLY SHE RAN UP THE STEPS.—*Page 119.*

who did clever balancing acts, and mysterious tricks.

There was an excellent reader, and a charming singer.

Next were some pleasing games led by Iris, and then they marched out to the dining-room, where they fully enjoyed a delicious banquet.

Stanton had pretended to be bored with the jugglers, and he had loudly boasted that he could do any of the tricks that the performers had done.

That was but a silly boast, for he well knew that he could do nothing of the sort.

After the little feast had been fully enjoyed, an orchestra that had just arrived, began to play for dancing.

Stanton could not dance, because he had always stoutly refused to learn. He stood apart watching them. Boys and girls kept

time to merry music, and at first he thought it very silly, but after a time he began to feel as if, instead of remaining out of the fun of his own accord, he had been left out.

When the other little guests were saying "Good-night" to Iris and her mother and assuring them that the party had been delightful, Stanton with his usual lack of courtesy, rushed upstairs for his overcoat and cap, raced down again, and ran down the street.

The Gifford car stood waiting for the two cousins, and the chauffeur called loudly to Stanton, but Stanton shook his head and kept on running.

"They won't see me riding home with a girl!" he muttered as he raced on homeward.

Rosalie, turned on the porch to wave her

hand to Iris, then she ran down the steps, and entered the car.

“Master Stanton went home on foot,” said the chauffeur. “I guess he preferred to, for when I called to him, he just looked at me, and started off at top speed down the street.”

Rosalie nodded, but said nothing.

“It’s a shame fer a lad ter treat a little lass like that,” muttered the chauffeur. “Who’d ever believe he belonged to decent folks, and him so rude!”

“Why, Stanton, where is Rosalie?” his mother asked when he ran up the steps, and in at the door that Blanford held open.

“Oh, she’ll be along soon. She’ll come in the car,” was the careless reply.

“I wish you would be kind to Rosalie,” said Aunt Cynthia. “Your father is never rude to any one.”

“Oh, well—I don’t like girls. You knew that when you invited her here,” Stanton said in a surly tone, adding, “and you never said I was rude, or that you didn’t like things I did, until since she’s been here,” he added, resentfully.

“I never saw you act as you have since Rosalie came,” said his mother.

“Well, I’ve told you the reason.”

“She is a little cousin to be proud of,” said Uncle Stanton, who, sitting in the library, had heard the conversation, and even as he spoke, Rosalie entered, her cheeks flushed, and her eyes very bright.

“Oh, such a lovely party!” she cried, “and every one was so dear, and the games, and the dancing were fine!”

“*Dancing!*” said Stanton in disgust.

“A person is apt to look rather stupid, if others of the party are dancing, while he

stands busily doing nothing!" Uncle Stanton said with a light laugh, and then he turned to Stanton.

"A week from Saturday, at two o'clock in the afternoon, the children's dancing-class will open, and you, Stanton, will be one of the pupils enrolled," he said.

"Aw, pshaw! Why should I want to go?" whined Stanton.

"It is a part of your education, and it is of no use, whatever, for you to coax to be excused."

While watching the dancers at the party, Stanton had felt a bit inclined to learn, so that he might at any party, join the dancers instead of being only an on-looker.

Now that his father insisted, Stanton became stubborn, and decided that he would not join the class.

He told himself he would run away

rather than join that class. He even thought of hiding and wondered where they would be least likely to search for him.

On the morning after the party, Lillian and Merwin were talking of Rosalie.

"I love Rosalie dearly, and I don't see how her Cousin Stanton can be so horrid."

"*Lillian!*" Mrs. Glynn said gently, but firmly.

"Oh, I know you think it isn't nice when I speak like that, but truly, Mother, if you had been at the Langly house, and seen how he acted, you wouldn't think I said too much," Lillian replied.

"Mother, he was as rude as a chap could be. He stood watching the dancers, and if any one came near him, he'd say how silly he thought it was to skip around to music," Merwin said.

“Mr. Gifford and his wife are charming, and I believe Stanton could have been trained to be courteous and agreeable,” said Mrs. Glynn.

“His mother thinks him quite charming as it is,” Merwin said, “but no one else does.”

“And at the party he wouldn’t join in any of the games, he said the entertainers were stupid, and we told you what he said about the dancing,” said Lillian.

“There was one thing he did enjoy and that was the supper. He rushed past all of us and so was the first at the table, and he was the last to leave it,” said Merwin.

It was time to start for school, and Mrs. Glynn watched them as they walked up the street together, and wondered what they were laughing about.

She was proud of her boy and girl.

"You know Rosalie told us that Stanton Gifford's mother wanted him to join the Saturday dancing-class, and that his father said that he must," Merwin was saying.

Lillian nodded.

"Well, I believe I can *make* him join!" declared Merwin.

"Why, Merwin! You know he said dancing was silly," cried Lillian.

"Silly or not, I almost know he'll join. I'm 'bout sure I can make him willing, yes, eager to!"

"What will you do?" Lillian asked, her blue eyes full of wonder.

"Just wait till you hear what I say to him!" Merwin said, laughing.

They were just in time for school so there was nothing for Lillian to do but wait.

She knew that urging Stanton would be useless, and she could not think what Mer-

win's plan might be, or why he felt so sure that it would work, and then she became so busy with her lessons that she forgot all about it.

After school she was standing with Rosalie, Iris, and Hilda when Merwin came towards them. Stanton, leaning against a tree-trunk was looking rather sullen.

He had made few friends at the public school, so was usually alone.

Charlie Winton and Brant Erling sauntered along after Merwin. They had been asked to, and when the three boys were near enough for Stanton, and nearly all the others to hear, Merwin, Charlie, and Brant began to talk about the dancing-class.

"Going to join the class, Stanton?" Brant asked.

"I may, and I may not," was the sullen answer, "I think it is—"

“Oh, we’ve heard you say that, over and over again, but we all know that’s not the *real* reason that you don’t care to join the class, Stanton,” Merwin said, his eyes twinkling.

“What do you mean?” Stanton asked rudely.

“I mean you’re afraid to try it for fear you’ll find that you can’t learn!”

“Who says I can’t learn?” roared Stanton.

“Well, I don’t really say that you positively *can’t* learn,” said Merwin, “but we fellows think you’re afraid to try.”

“Aw, I can learn anything I want to!” declared Stanton.

“We hear what you say, but we’re not so sure,” said Brant.

“Who couldn’t learn to dance?” grumbled Stanton.

“We think maybe *you* couldn’t,” said Merwin.

“You’ll find out I *can*!” cried Stanton, his eyes determined and angry.

“How are we to know?” Charlie said with a provoking chuckle.

“Because I’ll prove it to you fellows Saturday afternoon!” said Stanton.

“Better not try it,” advised Merwin, and Stanton, flushing to his hair, fairly shouted: “I’ll be there to show you, and nobody could stop me now!”

“He’ll be there!” Merwin said, as they walked toward home together.

“He will,” said Brant, “and he expects to be a wonder.”

“Maybe he will, but that isn’t saying whether he’ll be a gawky or a graceful wonder,” Merwin said, “but it isn’t likely that

any of us will do any fine work the first day."

Saturday was a bright, sunny day, and the boys and girls arrived at the little hall promptly. There were a few new faces, but the greater number of boys and girls were pupils at Mordaunt Manor.

Madam Claire had been given permission to use the hall at the manor, and a charming place it was for a dancing-class.

Rosalie was one of the first to arrive, but Stanton was much later. He had not intended to go with Rosalie, but he could not have done so if he had wished to, because he was not half ready when she left the house.

His clothes had been carefully chosen for him, and with the suit he was satisfied, but he objected to the blouse, and took out three others, tossing first one and then the

other aside, finally selecting the first one.

He fussed with his tie, he fussed with his pumps, and wriggled and twisted to see every inch of himself in the glass. A moment he stared, and then, evidently satisfied, he snatched his cap and overcoat, and hurried out and up the street.

He expected to be greeted with ill-concealed amusement by the boys, but they took no notice of his arrival, so intently were they listening to what the teacher was saying.

Stanton listened, and when the boys and girls tried the first simple steps, he did quite as well as the others.

He was an attentive pupil.

The boys had said that perhaps he could not learn to dance, and he was determined to prove to them that he could.

When Madam Claire, later in the after-

noon asked the boys to choose partners, Stanton chose a quiet-looking little girl whom he did not know, because she looked so timid that he thought she would not dare to speak if he were awkward.

Stanton's face was very red. He had asked the little girl to dance, and he soon realized that while he moved around very well when Madam Claire guided him, he had no idea how to guide the little girl. He was just thinking that it was lucky that he had chosen a meek-looking girl who would not dare to say a word about his awkwardness, when, turning clumsily, he trod heavily on her toe.

"Oh, you perfectly awful boy!" she cried, and when reproved by Madam, she tearfully replied, "Well, how can I help saying he is awful, when he's tramped on my foot?"

Madam thought it just the time for a little talk on courtesy.

“It is always right to be kind, and any person who is truly kind can not be rude,” she said. “Stanton did not, of course, intend to hit Marie’s foot, but having done so, he should have said that he was sorry, and Marie should not have spoken so sharply to him.

“Try bravely to smile when an accident happens, and when a partner makes an apology, be sure to accept it kindly.”

The boys and girls were sure that Madam Claire must be right, but they thought her rules of courtesy might sometimes be hard to obey.

CHAPTER VII

STANTON, JR.

AUNT Constance was puzzled by the letters that came to her from Rosalie.

“Bruce, dear, I do not understand why Rosalie writes as she does,” she said one morning during breakfast “Just listen to this loving little letter, and then see what you think.”

“I’m all attention,” declared her husband, and he listened while she read.

“Now, Bruce, her letters are interesting, and very well written for such a little girl, but while she tells us of her progress at school, of the girls and boys whom she met during her visit last winter, and of the

new friends that she has met this season, and describes her good times that she is greatly enjoying, she leaves us still wondering whether her cousin, Stanton is treating her kindly, or whether he is almost unbearable," Aunt Constance said.

"Here we are in California with all that distance between us, and we can't know if she is really happy or not," she continued.

"Have you asked her?" ventured Uncle Bruce.

"Well, not exactly," said his wife, "but in every letter I've written, I've said, 'Tell us something about Stanton,' or 'Is Stanton a pleasant playmate?' but Rosalie does not answer directly, and that makes me wonder. She told me in one letter that he had left the private school, and had come home, but she did not say why.

“When she speaks of him at all, she usually says it in one sentence near the end of the letter.

“Once she wrote, ‘Stanton is at home with a cold, and I am helping him with his lessons so that he can keep up with the others.’

“Another time she wrote, ‘Stanton and I went to the fine party I’ve just told you about. I had a lovely time’.”

“If Rosalie said that she had a *lovely* time, that tells me that Stanton kept away from her, and she was enjoying games, or the dancing with agreeable little friends,” said Uncle Bruce, with a laugh.

“I’ve been wondering whether he is behaving well, or if instead, he is acting so badly that Rosalie can’t begin to describe him,” said Aunt Constance.

On the following day a wee note arrived, written evidently in haste:

“DEAR AUNT CONSTANCE:—

“I’ll have just time to tell you that Stanton isn’t like what Aunt Cynthia sed. He dusn’t teese me much. I go to school, and am with the other boys and girls so much that he dusn’t have a chanse very often. When I *do* see him, he is acting some better than he did at furst, but he is—I guess I’ll say a *queer* boy. I don’t like to say anything worse than that, but he truly isn’t the least bit like a *angel*. I’m having a lovely time, and he doesn’t spoil it at all.

“Love to you and Uncle Bruce,

“from

“Your own,

“ROSALIE.”

“P. S. I could not say all this in my uther letters, for Aunt Cynthia makes me let her see every one, so she can tell me if any words are not spelled right.”

“Well, Bruce, what do you think of that?” Aunt Constance said.

“I think Cynthia wonders if our Rosalie

writes kindly of Stanton. Rosalie feels that she should answer your often-asked questions, so she has written, and mailed this little note to you. I think she has made the facts quite clear. Do not question her now when you write. I am sure that we understand her position in the Gifford home. Stanton and Cynthia love Rosalie and are doing their best to make her happy, while Stanton, Junior is not trying to add to her pleasure, but is, as Rosalie tells us, 'acting some better than he did at first.' "

Aunt Constance smiled happily.

"I believe you're right," she said. "Rosalie tells us that Stanton does not spoil her pleasure, and for that I am thankful."

Rosalie's letters were eagerly read when

they arrived, and treasured and re-read afterwards.

The weeks sped swiftly, and soon the little pupils at Mordaunt Manor were talking of the holidays, the week's vacation, and of gifts that they already were planning.

"I don't know what I'm to have for Christmas gifts," Rosalie said, "but there's one thing I do know, and that is that I'll like every one of them!"

"How do you know, if you haven't seen them?" a small girl asked.

"Oh, because I always do," Rosalie replied. "People always send me the loveliest things!"

"Rosalie Dare, it is you that are lovely, and you like all your gifts because you *mean* to like them!" said Lillian.

"That's true," said Iris, "Rosalie means

to like her gifts, just as she means to like people."

"I *do* like 'most everybody, and some I love," Rosalie said, smiling at the puzzled faces of her playmates.

They wondered that she loved so many.

Outdoors the white feathery flakes were whirling in the wind, but the schoolroom was warm and cheery, and Rosalie, skipping from one foot to the other, was the cheeriest thing in the room.

The pupils had been permitted to enjoy recess indoors, as many had preferred, a few of the boys, only, choosing to brave the north wind that so noisily whistled around the corner.

"Come over to my house this afternoon, Rosalie, will you? I so wish you would," said Lillian.

"I'll have some 'home work' to do this

afternoon," Rosalie replied, "but I'll come to-morrow afternoon."

"All right," Lillian said, but could not help wondering why Rosalie was to be so busy preparing lessons for the next day.

After school, Rosalie hurried towards home, while Iris walked along with Lillian.

"I don't see why Rosalie had so much lesson work to do to-day," Lillian said, "I thought the lessons for to-morrow were easier than those we had to-day, and to-morrow is Friday. There's Saturday to work on Monday's lessons."

"Rosalie wouldn't have to do much home work, if her own lessons were all that she had to prepare. It's helping Stanton that makes it take all afternoon," said Iris.

"I wish he'd do his own work," said Lillian, "so we could have Rosalie with us."

Rosalie was willing, especially for Uncle Stanton's sake, to help with the lessons that her cousin found it hard to prepare, but often she thought it a bit unfair that Stanton left his work for her to do, for that is really what he did.

Sometimes when she tried to explain why she did a certain thing, he, instead of listening patiently, and trying to do the problem, would push paper and pencil towards her saying, "I hear all you say, but you understand it, so you do it."

When Rosalie reached home, she found that Aunt Cynthia, as usual, was out, and she ate a lonely lunch, served by the tall butler, who saw that she was trying bravely to be cheerful, while in truth, she was lonely.

With Aunt Constance she had never been lonely, because she had gone with her whenever it was possible, and dear Aunt Con-

stance had so loved Rosalie that she had made but few engagements when the little girl could not be one of the party.

Aunt Cynthia belonged to so many clubs, and had so many interests that it was wonderful that she ever lunched at home.

Stanton raced home at noon, devoured a hearty lunch, snatched his books, and bolted out again to join the boys, and play until school time.

Rosalie could not have lunch until two o'clock, and so with Stanton at school, and his mother at one club or another, Rosalie had come rather to dread coming home from school.

She sat at the great table, with Blanford behind her chair, serving and watching her, and thinking that it was too bad for so sweet a child to be so much alone.

Rosalie was thinking of what dear Aunt

Constance had said, that a whole season at Aunt Cynthia's would be quite different from a two-weeks' visit, reminding her that because the time was limited, many pleasures had been crowded into the two weeks.

"You surely would not be going to the theatre, concerts, or parties every day if you were there for the season, and days and weeks might often come between your pleasures," she had said, "but you will have your school, and many little friends, and I hope you will be very happy."

Rosalie sighed, and slipped from her chair, and Blanford whispered softly: "The dear, patient little lass," and watched her as she crossed the hall to the library.

Her own home work was soon done, and she began to wonder why Stanton did not come.

She tried to play the piano, but she soon

tired of that, and taking a book over to the window, she sat on the cushioned window-seat, and tried to read, but she could not find a story that interested her, and when Uncle Stanton came in he found her, still sitting there, looking out with wide, sober eyes, at the people who passed the house.

“Alone, Rosalie?” Uncle Stanton cried in surprise.

“Yes,” she said, with a catch in her voice, and then the tears came.

He sat down, and placing his arm around her, drew her toward him. His eyes were very kind.

“I didn’t mean to cry,” said Rosalie.

“I didn’t know I was going to.”

“When did you get home from school, dear?” he asked gently.

“A few minutes after two,” she replied.

“When did your Aunt Cynthia go out?” was his next question.

“Oh, she didn’t go out and leave me,” said Rosalie. “She wouldn’t do that. It’s just that she didn’t come in at all.”

“H’m,” remarked Uncle Stanton, “and how about Stanton?”

“Well,” said Rosalie, “he hasn’t come home from school yet.”

“I see,” said Uncle Stanton, “and so our little girl sat here alone until when I came, her tears came, too.”

“I didn’t mean to cry,” she said again, “but it was seeming more lonesome every minute, until I thought I couldn’t stay alone one second longer, and then you came, and I was so glad that I cried.”

“H’m,” murmured Uncle Stanton, as he held Rosalie still closer, and just then Aunt Cynthia came in.

“Such a wonderful meeting at our club this afternoon,” she said, “and the subject was one that so interested the ladies. It was a meeting to make plans for foreign children who come to our large cities and towns and really suffer from loneliness, and we intend to find these lonely children, and appoint certain ladies to visit them, and cheer them.”

“A fine idea, and one of which I heartily approve,” said kindly Uncle Stanton, “but while you ladies are hunting the dingy streets of our city for lonely children, be sure that you have not left a lonely child at home. Rosalie has spent this entire afternoon, watching for you and Stanton, and she had no one to speak to until I came home at five.”

“Oh, I’m so sorry, Rosalie,” said Aunt Cynthia, “but we were all talking so earn-

estly that I forgot all about you, dear. And where is Stanton?" she asked, eagerly.

"I don't know," Rosalie said. "He hasn't come home since school."

"You often go over to Lillian's, and I supposed that you were with her," said Aunt Cynthia.

"Lillian wanted me to be with her, but I stayed home to help Stanton with his lessons, but he didn't come," Rosalie said.

"There must be plans made, and matters so arranged that Rosalie will have no afternoons like this," Uncle Stanton said, and Aunt Cynthia nodded as if agreeing.

Dinner was always served promptly at six, and just a few minutes before that hour, Stanton came in, and rushed upstairs to make himself a bit more presentable at table.

"Been out with the boys," he remarked,

as he ran up the stairs, as if that clearly explained his absence.

Uncle Stanton believed that cheer should prevail at the table, so he said nothing more about the afternoon, and the dinner passed pleasantly, Stanton seeming somewhat uneasy, however, and peering at times first at Rosalie, then at his father.

Rosalie chattered gayly. She was no longer alone, and she told of the wind that had whistled around the schoolhouse, of the flakes that had touched her cheeks, and once she turned toward Stanton.

“I stayed in so we could do ‘home work’ together, Stanton,” she said.

For a moment he hesitated, then he said, “I won’t have to do any lessons to-night. The other boys said to-morrow’s lessons were to be easy.”

“It is rather careless to trust to what

some one says," said his father, but Stanton tried to look as if he had not heard.

After dinner, young Stanton, in the library listened while his father strove to convince him that it would look much better if he tried to make a few pleasures for Rosalie in return for many afternoons that she had remained in to help him with his lessons.

"Aw, pshaw! I didn't *ask* her to help me," he cried. "She can do the problems easy enough, so she helped me. I could have done them alone."

"Could you?" said his father. "That is fine. For the next week, we will let Rosalie be free to spend the afternoons as she likes, and you can do your home work, and have the pleasure of proving that her aid was wholly unnecessary."

Stanton said nothing, looking down at his shoe, and listening without the least show of interest.

If he cared, he did not show it, and when they left the library, Stanton went upstairs to his room.

Aunt Cynthia had brought home a new book for Rosalie that delighted her, and bending her curly head over its clearly printed pages, she enjoyed the stories, pausing only when she turned a page and found a lovely picture.

Aunt Cynthia looked often towards where Rosalie sat with the lamplight shining on her curls, and she resolved to plan many pleasures for her little guest.

In his room, Stanton sat thinking. Rather ugly thoughts they were, and his face was not pleasant to see.

He had been sent up to his room to de-

cide if he had been as kind to Rosalie as he should have been, and to work upon his lessons, even though he had been told that they were "easy."

A long time he sat thinking, a far-away look in his eyes, and then, rousing himself, he picked up one of the books that he had flung upon the bed, and glanced at the pages marked for study.

A moment later he tossed it back again, landing it where he had found it.

"I can't bother with it," he said. "Guess I'll go to bed."

CHAPTER VIII

AT THE GREAT BRIDGE

STANTON said nothing about his studies at school, and Rosalie believed that he was doing good work.

She spent afternoons with Iris and Lillian, sometimes at their homes, often at her own. Aunt Cynthia had told her to have her little friends at lunch with her as often as she chose.

Once Lillian's brother Merwin came, and she noticed how well he appeared, while her Cousin Stanton, had he been there, would have been rude and greedy.

Blanford, serving Rosalie and her friends, was very happy, and he and the

cook planned to serve dainty lunches that would make the little guests long to come again.

“Sure, an’ it’s meself will cook the finest things for the little lass! It’s not often I see her, but whin I do, me heart warms to her sweet smile, an’ the nod of her curly head. Once she pattered down the stairs to the kitchen ter bring me a letter that had just come from Ireland, an’ then she perched on a ol’ wooden stool an’ read me her letter that came all the way from Californy, an’ herself lookin’ all the time loike a little fairy wid them soft eyes, an’ her curls, the *swate* little thing.”

“She is a sweet child,” said Blanford, “and sometimes when I see how rude Master Stanton is to her, I wish I had the right to shake him.”

“Oh, the young rascal,” said the cook,

“an’ his mother thinkin’ him an angel! Well, his father understands him, but men ain’t so foolish as the women.”

“That’s *right!*” declared Blanford, with a hearty laugh.

“Don’t take that as incloodin’ yerself!” cried the cook, “for ye well know yer English, an’ I wasn’t shpakin’ av Englishmen!”

Blanford was not vexed, for well he understood the cook and her gift of speech.

It was early in December when on a Saturday afternoon, Stanton did not appear at the dancing-class.

He had gone out soon after breakfast, and had not returned, when the lunch hour came.

“Do you know where he went?” Aunt Cynthia asked, but Rosalie had not the least idea.

“He said something when he rushed

across the hall, just as I was going upstairs," said Rosalie, "but I didn't hear what he said."

"O dear! I wish I could sometime, no, *always* know where he is," said Aunt Cynthia.

"Rosalie, he is so dear to me, that I am always worried when he rushes out like that, and stays so long away."

Aunt Cynthia helped Rosalie to dress for the dancing-class, remarking as she tied the ribbons of her slippers, "I was intending to go over with you and Stanton to Mordaunt Manor to see you two dance together."

"Oh, we never dance together," Rosalie said.

"You *never* dance together!" cried Aunt Cynthia. "Do you mean that, Rosalie?"

"Oh, surely, Aunt Cynthia," Rosalie said, and Aunt Cynthia looked amazed.

“And why is that?” she asked.

“Stanton always asks some one else to dance with him, and I dance with any one that asks me,” Rosalie said.

She was well pleased that it always happened thus, for Stanton was very clumsy, and always blamed his partner for any mistakes that he made, while many of the other pupils with whom she danced were pleasing partners.

“If he doesn’t come in soon, he will be very late at the class. If he comes at once he will be a bit late,” Aunt Cynthia said, “so you may as well run along, dear. It would take some time to get Stanton ready, but you have plenty of time to walk along without having to hurry. I shall stay in and help to get him ready—if he comes in in any sort of time,” and as she sat looking from the window after Rosalie had gone,

she wondered vaguely if she had always been too easy with Stanton.

"I've never taught him to obey," she murmured, "and now he really is too much for me to manage."

When Rosalie returned she found Aunt Cynthia still at the window watching.

It happened that Uncle Stanton, usually so prompt, was late to dinner.

Rosalie sat beside Aunt Cynthia at the window, longing to comfort her, yet not knowing what to say.

"Stanton has stayed out lots of times, Aunt Cynthia, and come in late to dinner, but you always find that nothing has happened to him," she ventured, and just at that moment Uncle Stanton came in.

"Hello, folks!" he cried cheerily, then: "Why, what's happened, Cynthia? You

look as if you feared an earthquake, and even Rosalie is not her jolly self.”

“I’m so worried about Stanton. He went out this morning, and he hasn’t been home since,” Aunt Cynthia said, still looking from the window.

Rosalie, her eyes wide and frightened, crept close to Uncle Stanton.

“She thinks something has happened to him!” she whispered.

Some one came along whistling, and Aunt Cynthia threw up the window.

“Brant!” she called, “Brant Erling!”

The boy stopped, then as she beckoned, he ran up the steps.

Aunt Cynthia ran to the door.

“Have you seen Stanton any time to-day?” she asked, “I am so anxious, I’ve not seen him since morning.”

"I saw him about five o'clock down near the bridge," the boy replied.

"Down near the bridge!" Aunt Cynthia repeated. "Down in that horrid neighborhood. What in this world could he be doing there? Was he alone?"

"He was with some rough-looking chaps, bigger than he," said Brant.

"But what was he *doing*?" persisted Aunt Cynthia.

"I don't know what he was planning to do, but when I saw him, the roughs had gone along the narrow shore under the bridge, and were calling to him, jeering. I couldn't see them, but Stanton was crouching on his hands and knees.

"Want me to look him up? I'd be glad to do that for you," Brant added, moved by the fear in her eyes.

Racing off without waiting for her per-

mission, he hurried along the main street, turned into a side street that led to the river and the great bridge. Not far from the bridge lay Stanton Gifford, just as he had seen him over an hour before.

“Hi! Stanton, what’s the matter?” he shouted, but hearing no reply, he went nearer.

“I say! What’s the matter?” he repeated.

Stanton moaned.

“Hurt?” Brant asked. “Here, I’ll help you,” but Stanton winced.

“I can’t get up. Don’t touch my arm, Brant. I guess it’s broken, and my knee is twisted.”

“Say, Stan, I’ll be right back,” said Brant, and without waiting to hear what Stanton was trying to say, he ran back at top speed to the Gifford home.

“He’s still down by the bridge,” cried Brant, as Uncle Stanton opened the door, “and he’s hurt. You’ll have to take your car, but I don’t know how you’ll get him in, for his arm is hurt and he wouldn’t let me touch it, and he says his knee is twisted, too.”

A famous surgeon lived near, and fortunately he was in. He rode with Uncle Stanton, with Blanford, in case he might be needed, and they were soon at the great bridge.

Stanton declared that he could not be touched, but the surgeon paid no heed, and directing Blanford, the two picked him up as if he had been a baby, and soon they were home, Stanton groaning all the way, and crying out sharply when they lifted him to carry him up the steps.

Aunt Cynthia, crying, and declaring that



NOT FAR FROM THE BRIDGE LAY STANTON GIFFORD.—*Page 163.*

she knew that something had happened, was wringing her hands and plying Stanton with questions.

“Now, madam, you must pardon me if I say that he is suffering too much to answer questions now. You must wait until he is comfortable, and that means wait some time,” the surgeon said, and Stanton was carried up to his room, while Aunt Cynthia was compelled to remain downstairs.

Rosalie, her eyes full of sympathy, clung closely to her, holding fast to her hand.

“Rosalie, you’re just a little comfort,” she said. “I don’t know what I should do without you.”

“I’m only loving you, and being sorry,” Rosalie said. “I wish, oh, *how* I wish there was something I could do.”

"You *are* doing, dear. You are comforting me," Aunt Cynthia said.

When those who had carried him upstairs returned to the living-room, Aunt Cynthia learned that Stanton's arm was broken, and his knee badly wrenched.

"And he doesn't say how it happened?" Aunt Cynthia asked.

"No, and I insist that you do not question him at present. I have set the arm, and have treated the knee, and a nurse will best know how to care for him and follow my directions," the surgeon said firmly.

"But I am his mother, and I want to care for him," wailed Aunt Cynthia.

"The fact remains that a woman trained for the work will be far better able to attend to him, and for a few days you must keep away from his room. He is suffering under a nervous strain, and when he is

ready to tell you all about the happening, I am sure that he will ask for you. Just now he does not care to talk.”

A week slipped by, Rosalie going to school, but giving her afternoons to Aunt Cynthia, Uncle Stanton coming home at night, and trying to make dinner a cheery meal.

Stanton was beginning to eat very well, and Aunt Cynthia was glad of that, but she was worried by something that the nurse had said.

“His arm and knee are getting along as well as could be expected,” she said, “but it is his gentleness that surprises me. He does just as I tell him, without complaining. I never attended a boy who was such an easy patient to care for.”

Aunt Cynthia looked surprised, but said nothing. She wondered why so painful an

accident should have rendered Stanton gentle and easily managed.

One Sunday afternoon he sent for them. He wanted them all to come up to his room, and when they entered, a quiet smile gave them welcome.

How different he looked from the sullen-faced boy that they had always seen.

“Please don’t ask any questions,” he said, “for I’m tired, but I want to tell you. I was not doing very well at school after I said that Rosalie needn’t help me, but I wouldn’t say so, and I didn’t want to go to dancing-class, so I made up my mind to run away. I’d been looking at a model of an old pirate ship in an antique-store window, and some rough-looking chaps came along beside me, and began to talk about the days when there were pirates on the sea. They had been reading some pirate

stories, and were planning to go out as soon as they had enough money they said.

“ ‘I could go now, if I wanted to,’ I said.

“ ‘Aw, who says you could?’ one of them sneered, and that made me mad, and I took out my money to prove what I’d said.

“ ‘Well, we’re going,’ the biggest boy said, ‘and we’ve got the boat, so if you want to pay that to us, you can go along.’

“I thought of school, and I went along with them to the bridge.

“There was no one passing, no one in sight when I handed over the money. They got into the boat, and let me just step on, when the big boy kicked my arm, and I knew it must be broken, and when I fell headlong, I twisted my knee. That’s all, except that I’m ashamed that I was silly

enough to trust them, and—that I'm sorry I've worried you.

“I can do better after this, I'm sure. I promise to try. That's all.”

“That is a great deal, my boy,” said Uncle Stanton. “I'm sorry that you had to have such a painful lesson, but you're mending now, and we'll do all we can to make these indoor days less tedious.”

“And there's one thing more that I meant to say, and that's to Rosalie,” resumed the boy.

“You did help me, Rosalie, and I wouldn't say I needed your help, but I'll say it now. I *did*. Oh, I thought of lots of things while I lay out there by the bridge. I was hurt, and I learned there how much I needed you all.”

“Stanton, my boy, when any one reaches a place where he can say he is sorry for

anything that he has done, he need not be ashamed, for he is bigger, and better than he has ever been before. For the first time I am proud of you, Stanton."

"I'll *make* you proud!" cried Stanton.

"But we've loved you all the time," said Aunt Cynthia.

"I'll help with your lessons so you won't get behind at school," Rosalie said eagerly, "and I'll read to you Stanton, or play any games that you can play with one hand."

"That will be *fine*!" Stanton said, and with a new light in his eyes he lay back against his pillow, and the nurse coming in, said that he must rest.

It was a happy family that talked of Stanton at dinner.

"If you could find a *new* game that he would need only one hand for, I'd play it to amuse him, until he was tired of it.

We can play one that he now has, and then, when he tires of that, we can take out the new one."

"You are a good little friend, Rosalie, and I think Stanton begins to realize it, but you must not stay in every day. The nurse reads to him, and you and Aunt Cynthia can take turns in relieving her," Uncle Stanton said.

"I'd be willing to stay in every day if it would help Aunt Cynthia. She has to go to so many club meetings," Rosalie said.

"The clubs will have to do without me for a time," Aunt Cynthia said smiling.

"I feel happier because Stanton seems to be improving," she continued, "and I believe we can make his home weeks cheerful."

"We certainly can," agreed Rosalie, "for already I've thought of ever so many

things that I can do all myself. I mean no one will have to show me how.”

“We never have to show you how to be kind,” Uncle Stanton said, “and I have thought of a plan to give him variety.

“On the days that the nurse reads to him, you, Cynthia, shall play games with him until he wants to go to sleep.

“On the days that Rosalie plays games with him, I’ll read to him in the evening until he is sleepy.”

They all agreed heartily to this plan.

CHAPTER IX

HOLIDAY PLANS

THE four members of the Gifford home had learned much by young Stanton's accident.

Stanton himself had learned the value of his home, and knew how foolish he had been ever to think of leaving it.

His father had learned that his boy possessed finer traits than he had ever shown.

His mother had learned that if she had been firm with him, he would have been a better boy, and dear little Rosalie had learned that she could think of more ways of cheering dull days than she had ever thought possible.

Such pleasant tales Rosalie told the cook of Stanton's bravery and patience that dainty treats were cooked to make a nice little surprise on the tray with the food that was carried to his room, and a strange little look appeared on Stanton's face each time that he saw them.

One night when an extra dainty treat reached him he said:

"She makes me remember that I never spoke decently to her,—but I'll have a chance to, after this."

Rosalie came home from Lillian's one afternoon with three books that her brother sent for Stanton to enjoy.

"It certainly is dull to be kept in," Merwin said, "and these books of adventure might amuse Stanton. I couldn't tell which of the three I liked best when I'd read them. I'm sure he'll like them, and

if he does, tell him, Rosalie, I'll lend him others, and come over and stay a while when I bring them. I'd be glad to take my turn reading to him."

"Oh, thank you," cried Rosalie, "I'll tell him, and he'll be so pleased."

And Stanton felt ashamed when he remembered how often he had been blunt and rude to Merwin Glynn.

It was becoming colder, and already plans were being made for Christmas, that Stanton hoped to enjoy.

His knee had so improved that it was now nearly well. With care, he could walk about his room, and by Christmas time he would be able to go downstairs, and that would be a change and a treat.

Other people were busily planning for Christmas, and out in a prosperous town,

many miles from Uncle Stanton's home, Aunt Blanche Davenport, was talking of holiday gifts, and at the same time giving her opinion of various things.

Aunt Blanche considered her opinion valuable, and Uncle Corliss was patiently listening. Uncle Corliss always listened.

Their young daughter Claire was reading a book, often pausing to listen.

"I don't understand, Corliss, why I should have to wait so long for a letter from Cynthia. Even if we're not own sisters, we were married at about the same time, and surely belong to the same family."

She had asked no question, so her husband merely nodded.

"I wrote three weeks ago to invite Rosalie to spend the holidays with us."

Uncle Corliss nodded again, but also

ventured to remark that Rosalie was rather young to take such a long trip alone.

“That’s what *I* think!” said Claire.
“She’s just a child!”

Uncle Corliss laughed heartily.

“Well, Claire, what are you but a child?” he asked.

“She’s only seven,” Claire said, adding with a toss of her head, “while *I* am twelve.”

“You are still a child, Claire,” Uncle Corliss said, “so it is well to be a sweet child.”

“I’m not a baby,” said Claire.

“Neither is a girl who is seven years old,” said Aunt Blanche. “Don’t be absurd, Claire.”

“Now, Corliss, listen to me,” she continued. “I didn’t ask Rosalie to come

alone. I invited Cynthia and her husband, and young Stanton to come with her."

"That perfectly horrid boy!" cried Claire. "Well, I should hope they wouldn't answer, and say they'd all come!"

"Why, Claire! It's only a few days ago that you said that a Christmas party would be jollier than just we three to enjoy the day," Aunt Blanche cried in surprise.

"Well, *my* idea of a party was to invite eleven boys and girls of my own age to be here," said Claire, "and I thought that would be fine! I'm twelve, and there'd be twelve at the party."

"That is your idea for Christmas, Claire?" Uncle Corliss said.

"Now my idea would be to have a celebration wherein your mother and I could enjoy the day with you, for of all holidays I think that Christmas should unite the

family. If a few relatives, some of our age, and younger ones for you, could be with us, it *should* mean pleasure for all."

Claire said nothing, but one could see that she did not like the plan.

"I still think that Cynthia should write to me," Aunt Blanche said, and the next morning the longed-for letter arrived. It opened thus:

"DEAR BLANCHE:

"I thank you for your kind invitation, but it is impossible for me to accept. My small son is just recovering from an accident, the pain of which he has borne like a martyr. Dear little Rosalie has been such a help in reading to him, and in other ways amusing him so that his weeks indoors have been happier, that I can not express my gratefulness to her.

"This time Stanton is a hero.

"He has improved wonderfully during these weeks."

There followed a few lines describing the wonderful patience, gentleness, and general

loveliness of young Stanton's nature, at which Uncle Corliss was so unkind as to laugh heartily.

He had seen the boy three times. Once when he was five, next when he was seven, and again when he was eight.

"Cynthia certainly has a wonderful idea of her son," said Uncle Corliss, when he could stop laughing long enough to speak.

"Hero! *Hero!* My senses! The last time she wrote he was 'a little angel,' she said. I was out there when he was five years old. It was a business trip, and I spent about an hour there. Stanton showed some of his loveliness during that hour. He emptied the goldfish bowl out of the window, leaving the poor little goldfish gasping on the lawn. Fortunately the maid was able to save them.

"He tied two soft, silken portières to-

gether for a swing, and roared like a lion when they came down and caused him to fall and bump his head, and the remainder of my call was made pleasant by his loud bawling because his fond mother would not give him a large, round silver bowl to beat upon for a drum.

“The next time I was there he was seven, and not at all improved. I dined with them, and the youngster shouted for an entirely different dinner from that which was served. Cynthia ordered the butler to have the cook prepare it for him, and when it was ready, the young rascal looked it over, and ate what he liked. Potato not pleasing him, and pieces of the meat that he did not care for, he angrily threw down upon the beautiful rug. Cynthia, by way of excuse for him, said that his appetite was so dainty, so delicate, and his taste so fine

that he could not endure some foods that ordinary children would enjoy.

“I told her that it would cure some of his notions if he were made to go hungry for one day, but you know Cynthia. She said that I was heartless.”

“The next year, when he was eight, you were again at Cynthia’s,” said Aunt Blanche.

“Yes, and I was there less than a half-hour. When I looked for my hat, the crown had been jammed flat between two heavy books, and I had to borrow one of Gifford’s so that I could do down-town and buy a new one. Oh, if Stanton was a gentle little angel then, think what he could do now, if he is strong enough to be a *hero!*”

Uncle Corliss was greatly amused by the

letter, and even his wife smiled at his jolly laughter.

“If the accident has made him really patient and brave, I am glad of it,” he said, “but when I think how much room there was for improvement, I feel that I’d have to see him now to understand,” and he laughed again.

“I must be making out my list of gifts,” said Aunt Blanche, “and what can I send to Stanton. I don’t know what he could enjoy indoors.”

“Send him a book,” ventured Claire.

“And what do you wish to send?” Aunt Blanche asked. “He is your cousin, you know.”

“I don’t know,” Claire replied, “but the only time he was ever here, he pulled my hair, and said that girls were horrid, and

that made me mad, and I said, 'So are boys!' "

"You should be careful, Claire. If you said *that*, then you were as rude as he," her father reminded her.

"Oh, no," said Claire, "because I didn't pull his hair."

Claire was a favorite at school, and rather a pleasant girl in the classroom, or out at play. She was inclined to be generous, and she was bright and lively. Only at home did she seem selfish, the place of all places where one should be generous and kind.

It happened that another aunt and uncle were talking of Christmas and Rosalie.

There had been a snowstorm, and the Curtis farm house, its big barn and sheds, its apple-trees, and the stone wall that they overhung, looked as if winter had brought them fluffy white furs.

Aunt Lucia, with dinner on the table was looking out towards the barn.

“There’s Jason now, right on time, as usual. My, what a fine thing it is to have a man that is always prompt.”

He stamped the snow from his boots, and his kindly eyes twinkled.

“Always seems good to see you looking for me, Lucia,” he said.

They took their places at the table, and while they ate, he told bits of village news that he had heard at the post-office.

“Oh, and here’s a letter for you. Guess it’s from Cynthia by the looks of the writing.”

Aunt Lucia read it aloud. It was much the same as the one that Aunt Blanche had received.

Aunt Lucia had thought it would be fine

to have Rosalie at Christmas, and invited the Giffords to come and bring her.

“Well, I would like to have Rosalie here,” Uncle Jason said, “but I did think it quite a chore to have to endure Stanton, Jr., in order to see her. Last time he was here, ’twas summer time, an’ he chased the cows until I chased him with a pitchfork. That stopped him. Of course I wouldn’t have touched him with it, but he didn’t know that.

“Why, the cat lived up in a tree the three days he was here and wouldn’t come down till she was sure he’d gone, and I didn’t blame her. I felt like doing the same.

“I reckon the thing to do to be sure of being peaceable is to plan to be where Stanton *ain’t!*”

“Now, Jason, I oughtn’t to laugh at you,

but what you said is the truth, so how can I find fault?"

"Sure you can't, Lucia, but say! What *does* Cynthia mean by calling that boy a 'hero'?"

"Oh, I don't know," was the quiet reply. "Cynthia has always been a puzzle to me. She always had a habit of using large words, and calling any one that she cared for by some high-sounding name or title. I wonder she didn't call him a prince."

"Guess 'twould fit Stanton 'bout as well," Uncle Jason said, dryly.

And while relatives guessed, and wondered, and talked, things were progressing very comfortably at the Gifford home.

Plans for Christmas were holding the attention of all, Stanton, for the first time seeming interested.

The year before he had been away at

private school, and had not returned for the holidays at home.

His knee was nearly well, now, and, with care, he could use his arm and hand.

Often, when he was reading, he would pause, and seem to be thinking, thinking.

It had been tedious staying indoors. Sometimes the days had seemed endless, but surely every member of the household had tried to help him, and friends had done their part.

“And what have I ever done for any one?” he said one day, and Uncle Stanton hastened to say, “It is never too late to begin.”

“I know it,” Stanton said in a low voice, “and that’s what I’ve been thinking.”

“You might plan a gift for Rosalie,” Uncle Stanton said, “for surely she has

been your 'Little right-hand *man*.' She has given many, many hours to amusing you, and helping you with lessons, when she might have been out at play."

"She's been a regular trump!" said Stanton. "Let me choose a gift for her, and I'll write on a card to go with it:

"To Rosalie Dare: A Regular Trump!"

Uncle Stanton laughed heartily at the rough compliment for dainty Rosalie.

"I think you and I could go down-town in the car to-day and choose the gift, Stanton. What do you say?"

"Hoo-ray!" shouted Stanton so loudly that Aunt Cynthia coming in, hastily covered her ears with her hands.

"We two gentlemen are going to take a little trip down-town," said Uncle Stanton, "and it being a *business* trip, no ladies can go with us."

“Do you think it quite fair to leave the ladies of your party out?” Aunt Cynthia asked laughing, “or are there a few secret holiday errands to be done?”

“Oh, we’re not telling, are we, Father?” said Stanton grandly.

Aunt Cynthia laughed and hurried away to tell Rosalie.

It was the first time that her husband and small son had shown an intimate feeling.

During the long, slow mending of his injuries, Stanton had, for the first time learned to know the worth of his father’s love and regard. He had also learned that it was her love for him that had made his mother blind to his faults, and with long hours to think, he had acquired a poor opinion of himself, and had resolved that

many things beside his injured arm could be improved.

“I’ve never wanted to give presents before,” he said, “but now it seems as if I could not give enough.”

CHAPTER X

CHRISTMAS CHEER

IT was surprising to see what a keen interest Stanton felt in all that related to the holidays.

Neither the boy nor his father could be coaxed to tell what they saw, where they went, or what they did during the downtown trip.

“Oh, we saw millions of things, and we bought some, but there wasn’t room enough in the car to take home all we saw, so we only chose what the car could bring!” Stanton cried, laughing as he thought what fun it had been “shopping” with Father.

For weeks Aunt Cynthia had been think-

ing of something that she had not mentioned. That was remarkable, because Aunt Cynthia usually told her latest plans as soon as they occurred to her.

Rosalie was writing to Uncle Bruce, pausing while she tried to remember how to spell a word that she wished to use.

Stanton, looking from the window, was wondering how long it would be before he could venture out safely on slippery sidewalks.

It was holiday vacation, and the days seemed long to the boy who had always been active.

Aunt Cynthia peeped in, and rightly guessed that it would be just the time to propose something new.

“I’ve another plan to make Christmas very delightful, and I am sure that you two children will like it,” she said. “We

always enjoy our gifts early on Chirstmas morning, and then comes the question of afternoon and evening. The boys and girls have been so kind to you and Rosalie, that I think we should plan something delightful for them."

"That's what I've been thinking," said Stanton, in a low voice, "but that is as far as I get. I've not yet thought what to do."

"We could not give a large party, because your arm and knee are not yet able to endure a crowded room full of active boys and girls, so I've decided that the party be planned in this manner:

"Let us make it a little party of twenty boys and girls to attend a fine Christmas matinee, then return with us for a good hot dinner, and spend the evening with games, and later ice-cream, cakes, fruit, nuts, and

candy? Would you enjoy that Stanton? Would you, Rosalie?"

"The very thing!" cried Stanton. "I've never tried to help entertain folks. I never wanted to, but—oh, I don't know just why it is, unless it's because every one has been so generous, I feel I'd like to now, and if the first part of the party is at the theatre, that fixes that much of it, and when we get home it will be easier to talk."

"That will be a wonderful party," said Rosalie, "and if there will be just twenty in all, that means eighteen besides us two."

"That's it," said Stanton, "Nine boys and nine girls, and we can choose them from those that we've known and always liked."

Then Stanton stopped—, his father laughed, and Stanton saw the joke in what he had just said.

“Aw, pshaw! I mean the boys I like best and the girls that Rosalie likes best. I don’t know any girls, so I’ll not help choose them.”

The list of guests was quickly made, and the invitations sent, and all were promptly accepted.

Christmas dawned bright, crisp, and cheery. Parcels containing gifts had been arriving all the week, and now, oh joy, they could be opened!

From Uncle Bruce and Aunt Constance Rosalie received a locket and chain. There was a tiny garnet, set in the center of the locket.

She was delighted, and at once clasped it around her neck.

Uncle Stanton and Aunt Cynthia gave her a muff and neck-piece of the lovely white fox, and from Stanton, Jr. a silver

chain and clasp to fasten the fur about her neck so that she could not lose it.

She was delighted and could hardly wait to "try on" the beautiful furs.

"Such lovely gifts!" she cried. "Such *wonderful* gifts!"

"Do you like *mine*?" Stanton asked anxiously.

"Oh, how could I help liking it?" Rosalie cried, "The dear little silver chain that will hold my fur collar fast, and I'm so surprised," she added, "because I never dreamed that *you* would choose a gift for me."

She said it so gently that he could not feel vexed, but he did feel ashamed to think that he had seemed so ungrateful for her help and kindness that she was amazed to receive a Christmas gift from him! What a rude boy he must have been!

Rosalie had given him the gift of all gifts for an active boy, a book of wonderful adventure tales, and he was delighted.

Aunt Blanche sent a fine lace handkerchief to Rosalie, and a silk handkerchief to Stanton.

She had thought of finer gifts, but, as usual, her small daughter, Claire had demanded such costly things, and so many of them that others to be remembered received less expensive presents than those that she had first chosen.

Aunt Lucia Curtis had knit some soft white mittens for Rosalie, and a pair of seal brown ones for Stanton.

“Say, Rosalie! These mittens will be great for snowballing,” declared Stanton, “and your white ones ought to look fine with your white furs.”

“They will,” agreed Rosalie, “but I’d

wear them even if they looked awfully, because Aunt Lucia knit them, and I just know she knit them lovingly."

Stanton looked puzzled.

After a moment he asked:

"If they'd been pink-and-orange striped, would you have worn them? Would you have *liked* to wear them?"

His eyes were dancing, and his voice was teasing.

"I wouldn't have liked wearing such awful colors," Rosalie said, slowly,—“but if some one loved me enough to make them for me, I'd *wear* them!"

"She would, wouldn't she, Father?" Stanton said.

"She surely would," Uncle Stanton said gently, "because Rosalie is true."

"*I'm* going to be true," declared Stan-

ton, and his father, laying his hand on the boy's shoulder, said firmly:

“I believe you, my boy.”

When two o'clock arrived, the little guests were all present at the theatre, and in their seats.

How bright, how full of life they seemed!

Rosalie sat between Lillian and Iris, and Stanton between Lillian's brother and Brant Erling, the two boys that he liked best.

The music was bright and lilting, the costumes full of color, and the dancers never had seemed so graceful as on this afternoon.

How the children laughed and chattered when they left the theatre, and clambered into the waiting cars that would take them to the Gifford home!

Stanton was the gayest of the party. He knew, for the first time, the joy of giving pleasure. He looked eagerly at the happy faces, listened to their joyous laughter, and he wished that his party might last for weeks, instead of a few hours.

He wondered what had so changed him? Why had he never cared to make others happy?

“It’s Rosalie’s coming here to stay with us. She’s made me ashamed to be mean or unkind,” he said, to himself. “She’s a trump! A good little friend if she *is* only a girl.”

It was true that Rosalie had been patient, and eager to help him to bear the tedious weeks indoors.

There was another cause for the change in the boy who had been so heedless and selfish.

There had been long hours when he could only read, or lie and think, and during the days of suffering, he could not help realizing how generous, how very thoughtful, how kind every one had been to him.

A sense of shame filled his heart, and he resolved that just as soon as he was well, he would strive to be as kind, as generous, as friendly toward all as his father was.

“I mean to be like Father, when I grow up,” he whispered to himself.

The house was brightly lighted as the cars drew up at the curb, and the little guests raced up the steps and in at the door that Blanford opened wide for them.

When wraps had been cared for the butler announced that dinner was served, and in the great dining-room they gathered to enjoy a feast.

Roast turkey, chicken patties, plain salads,

followed by plum pudding, small cakes and macaroons, hot chocolate, and other good things disappeared as if by magic.

Soft music swept out through the hall, and the children slipped from their chairs, and hurried to the great living-room. Yes, there were musicians making fascinating music. Soon the boys chose partners, and gayly they skipped to the lively melodies.

Stanton, watching them, resolved to learn to dance. He saw no fun now in being an on-looker.

After several numbers had been enjoyed, Mrs. Gifford stepped out into the center of the room, and lifted her hand for silence.

“I have a treat for you all,” she said. “I invited two young dancers to come here to-night, and they have just arrived. Now if you will all be seated, we will watch

them as they give their first number, 'A Spanish Dance,' in costume."

The children quickly drew back to the sides of the room, and the orchestra played the first measure of a Spanish waltz.

Then—Rosalie leaned forward and caught her breath.

"Guarda!" she whispered, "Guarda and Bert!"

Eagerly the children watched the graceful movements of the dancers, but Rosalie watched more earnestly than the others. She knew Guarda and Bert, she had played with them. Now, she was proud of them!

When their dance was finished they ran off, returning in Scotch costume for the "Fling," and after that they dressed in Italian costumes, and gave the "Taran-tella."

The boys and girls applauded with wild

delight, and after Guarda and Bert had slipped into their evening costumes, they returned to the living-room to enjoy the games with the others.

Rosalie ran to Guarda, and threw her arms about her, and Uncle Stanton and Aunt Cynthia were delighted to find that Rosalie already knew the two clever dancers.

It happened that Uncle Stanton knew Guarda's father, and when Aunt Cynthia said that she intended securing some entertainers that children would enjoy, Uncle Stanton at once thought of his friend's little daughter.

Stanton found Bert and questioned him.

"I've always said a boy who would dance was a 'sissy,' but I didn't know what I was talking about. You're a *regular fellow*, Bert, and your dancing was great. Say,

do you think a chap—well, any fellow,—I mean do you s'pose *I* could learn such dances as those that you did?"

"Sure you could," Bert said, heartily, "and if you care to learn them, I'll teach you. What do you say? I've six pupils now, and I'm looking for more. Guarda has some girl pupils. I teach boys."

"Wait till I ask Father," cried Stanton. He returned with an eager smile.

"Father says I must go to the regular class Saturday afternoons, but he will pay you well for private lessons on the fancy dances, and pay Guarda the same to teach my cousin, Rosalie."

Uncle Stanton joined them.

"Well, young man, Stanton tells me you are teaching. That's right, my boy. That shows ambition. Now, let us talk business. How about Saturday mornings?"

I'll send the car for you and Guarda, because that will save time for you, and will also send you home."

He named a generous price. "Would you young teachers be satisfied with that?" he asked.

"We've never dared ask so much," Bert said, honestly."

"That being the case, call Guarda here," Uncle Stanton said.

Guarda came running, and Bert told her of their good fortune.

"I shall expect you to make Stanton and Rosalie work," said Uncle Stanton. "The doctor has told us that Stanton must constantly exercise, to rid his injured foot and leg of stiffness, and he suggested dancing, so you, Bert, will be aiding the doctor and my Stanton at the same time."

“And I’ll be glad to help, you are so generous to us,” Bert replied.

New games were proposed, and the boys and girls enjoyed them with a will.

Stanton stood apart from them, watching the fun. He was a bit afraid to join the others, lest his arm might be pushed so as to harm it. Rosalie ran to him, thinking that he was lonely.

“What are you thinking of, Stanton?” she said, “Wishing you could play?”

Stanton turned.

“I was thinking that there’s not one boy or girl here that hasn’t done something for me while I’ve been shut in, and I’d like to thank them, but I don’t know how to.”

“Tell them that, Stanton. Tell them that!” cried Rosalie.

He hesitated and his cheeks grew very red

Without another word, Rosalie darted away to the center of the room. A game was just finished and she held her hand high above her head, as a signal for silence.

The children stared.

“My cousin, Stanton wants to say something to you all, so please be still just a minute.”

She ran back to where Stanton stood abashed, and snatching his hand, she dragged him forward. All listened intently while the boy who had been so ill-mannered said, hesitatingly:

“I just want to thank you, every one of you for the fine things you’ve done for me while I had to stay in. I couldn’t tell you in a month how much I thank you, and,—oh, I can’t begin to tell you. I guess that’s all.”

“Spoken like a man, Stanton, boy. I’m proud of you,” said Uncle Stanton, who



"TELL THEM THAT, STANTON. TELL THEM THAT!"—*Page 209.*

now stood beside him, his hand on the boy's shoulder, his eyes shining.

“So am I,” said his mother, who knew if she had asked him to do the same thing, he would not have done it, but Rosalie could make him ashamed to refuse to do a kind or proper thing.

Brant Erling gave the signal and the boys and girls gave three rousing cheers for Stanton Gifford.

Stanton's eyes were shining with happiness, and the quick tears that filled them, but the big lump in his throat would not let him speak, so he gave them a nod and a smile, but Rosalie was not quite satisfied.

Again she lifted her hand.

“Stanton's glad you cared to cheer him, but he can't say a word, 'cause there's a big lump in his throat that he's trying to swallow.”

Dear little Rosalie. She would not have Stanton misunderstood.

He was trying to do better, to be kind and considerate of others, and wished his friends to know it.

After a delicious treat of ice-cream, sherbet, fruit, nuts, and all sorts of bonbons, the little guests said good-night, said it had been a wonderful party, and went home tired, but very happy.

“I never knew what fun it would be to give a fellow’s friends a good time,” Stanton said, when they were alone.

CHAPTER XI

THE LITTLE PORTRAIT

IRIS and Lillian came over to see Rosalie the next morning, and what a delightful time they had talking of the party, and eagerly they talked of Guarda and Bert.

“They are Guarda McLean and Berton Russell,” said Rosalie, “but I call them Guarda and Bert.”

“Madam Claire doesn’t teach fancy dancing, but you and Stanton will come to the Saturday-afternoon class won’t you?” Lillian asked anxiously.

“Oh, yes, we’ll be there, and in the morning Guarda and Bert will be with us,” said Rosalie. “I can hardly wait for Saturday to come.

“Uncle Stanton says that our school lessons must be well prepared, so we can enjoy Saturday, for if we neglect our school work, we must give up our dancing, so you may be sure we’ll do all our home work so as to get good marks at school.”

“Come over to my house,” said Lillian, “That is what I came for. I want you and Iris to see the funny old costumes that have just come from my great-aunt’s old home. Some of them are over a hundred years old, and some are what ladies wore, and some are little girls’ dresses, and there is a boy’s suit with a droll little coat and cap.”

“Oh, may we try them on?” cried Rosalie. “Will your mother let us?”

“She said we might,” Lillian replied.

They waited for no urging.

They raced along the sidewalks as if there were a chance that the ancient cos-

tumes might run away before they could arrive at Lillian's home.

In an upper room Mrs. Glynn had spread the quaint garments on the bed, and eagerly the three little friends examined them.

There was a rose-colored brocade that delighted them. Silver vines and crimson roses were wrought on the pink satin, and such a long train lay on the floor!

There was another gown of green velvet, with lovely old lace, and a blue silk trimmed with gold lace. There were hats with long plumes, quaint bonnets trimmed with ribbons and roses, satin slippers, and quaint fans with carved ivory sticks.

Two dresses, just the size for Iris and Lillian, one pink, the other primrose yellow, and the boy's suit! White trousers, a blue jacket with brass buttons, and oh, such a funny cap!

“Let me try on the boy’s things?” said Rosalie, “I so wonder how I’d look in them.”

“You ought to look like a nice little boy, with your short brown curls under that cap,” Lillian said, and Rosalie lost no time in slipping out of her own clothes, and into the white trousers, the white blouse, blue jacket with its big, shining brass buttons.

“Why, Rosalie Dare, you cute little boy!” cried Iris.

“Put the cap on, Rosalie!” said Lillian, and the cap completed the picture.

“Now, wait till I get into this yellow dress, and I’ll be your sister Daphne,” said Iris.

“Why did you choose that name?” Rosalie asked.

“I didn’t choose it,” Iris replied. “Mrs.

Glynn said that the boy who once wore that suit was called Gerald Glynn, she *thought*; but she was *sure* his sister was Daphne, and she wore these dresses.”

“The boy’s name was ‘Gerald,’ like your brother’s name,” said Rosalie, “and while I’m wearing this suit I’ll play that my name is Gerald, too.”

“The boy had one sister, but we’ll just ‘make-believe’ he had two,” said Lillian, “so I’ll wear this pink dress, and what will you call me? Oh, I know. There are some old portraits in the hall, and one, a little girl is called ‘Dorinda,’ and I’ll be little Dorinda.”

They walked up and down the long room, primly erect, the two dressed as girls taking mincing steps, Rosalie, as “Gerald,” trying to take longer steps, marching along

with such long strides that she looked as if she felt decidedly important.

They were wondering what sort of games the children of a hundred years ago played, when steps approaching made them turn.

There in the doorway, smiling at their quaintness, stood Mrs. Glynn.

“Well, well, you little folks of a hundred years ago! How very fine you look, and Rosalie, surely is a fine little lad.”

Rosalie lifted her cap.

“Dear me, child, who is it that you remind me of? Let me think.”

She stood for a moment, a far-away look in her eyes. Suddenly she started.

“I have it!” she cried. “You are like an old daguerreotype that we have kept because of its quaintness. I never noticed the likeness before, but now, in that suit, it is so striking that no one could help see-

ing that you, and the little boy in the picture are wonderfully alike. I must find it at once. I believe I know just where it is."

She soon returned, and the three little friends looked first at Rosalie, and then at the picture.

"It is like Rosalie," they agreed, and Lillian reached for the picture.

"Please let me take it," she said.

No one knew exactly how it happened, but between Mrs. Glynn's hand that held it, and Lillian's hand that reached for it, the picture slipped to the floor, rolled over, and came out of the pretty plush-lined case that had held it.

Mrs. Glynn stooped to recover it.

"Fortunately it isn't broken," she said. As she turned it over, before returning it to its case, she saw finely-written lines upon

its back. Adjusting her glasses she read aloud:

“Gerald Glynn Dare,” and below, “seven years old.”

The date, less definite, she found to be eighteen hundred and twenty.

“Rosalie,” said Mrs. Glynn, “I am wondering if you and Lillian are related. This little boy bears the two names. I must ask my husband to-night if he knows of others in his family named Dare. I never took the little picture from the case, and so I saw the name to-day, for the first time. I thought he was a ‘Glynn’.”

“If Father can say that Rosalie and I are cousins, or *almost* cousins I’ll be so glad!” cried Lillian, and Mrs. Glynn said: “I, too, should be very glad to claim her as a little relative.”

“If father says we are relatives I’ll not

wait to tell you. I'll call you to-night and tell you. I'll call you even if he only says '*maybe*' we are relatives."

Mrs. Glynn taught them to play an old-time game that her own grandmother had taught her, and later they tried "making a cheese" by turning rapidly until their full skirts were distended, when they would suddenly duck, and the stiff silk would stand out much like the shape of a huge cheese.

This proved so interesting that Rosalie slipped out of the boy's suit, and into a girl's dress so that she, too, might practise making a "cheese."

Uncle Stanton, as usual, came home early for dinner, and Rosalie told him about the quaint costumes, and the little lad in the old picture.

"And wasn't it odd that just after they

had said that that little boy and I looked alike, the picture in its fine leather case fell on the floor. When the picture in its tiny gilt frame rolled from the case, Mrs. Glynn saw that something was written on the back. It was the boy's name, and a date: 'Gerald Glynn Dare, 1820.'

"Oh, I *do* hope Lillian and I are cousins!" concluded Rosalie.

"Would she be dearer if she were your cousin?" Uncle Stanton asked, gently tweaking one of her curls.

"I don't see how she could be dearer," Rosalie said, "but I'd feel as if she *belonged* to us, and that I *belonged* a bit to her—and to all the Glynnns," Rosalie added, "and they are all so very dear."

An hour later the telephone rang.

It happened that Stanton was standing near it, so he answered.

“It’s Lillian,” said Stanton, “and she can’t wait a second to speak to you. She sounds a bit crazy, so you’d best hurry.”

“Hello!” called Rosalie, and then followed a conversation that greatly amused Uncle Stanton and his wife.

“Oh, Lillian! O my! Do you *really* mean it? Oo—oo!”

Then a long space while Rosalie listened, and then, so excited was she that she actually bounced on the chair.

“His great-uncle’s name was Carlton Dare? That was my own grandfather’s name, and my father’s name, too.

“What?”

“Oh, isn’t that fine? Third cousins, did you say, *third* cousins?”

“Well, then we’ll say cousins, and not bother to say third!”

Rosalie hung up the receiver, whirled

about, and sprang from the chair to the floor.

“What do you think, every one of you? Lillian and I are *cousins!*” she cried.

“Only *third* cousins,” growled Stanton, “and that isn’t much relation, is it, Father?”

“Not very closely related, and yet relatives,” Uncle Stanton said.

“I wonder who else will be claiming her for a relative?” said young Stanton in disgust, “Rosalie simply *can’t* be everybody’s cousin.”

“What is your objection?” asked Uncle Stanton, who was greatly amused at what Stanton had said.

“Because every one who can prove that she is a relative, will be asking her to visit, and we who are really, *truly* relatives won’t see her at all,” said Stanton, and

Rosalie looked up at him with puzzled eyes.

“But you’ve often said I was only a girl!” she said, slowly.

“Oh, well, what if I did? I haven’t been saying anything like that lately, have I?” he asked.

“N—no,” said Rosalie, slowly.

“All I’ve been saying is that you’re a regular trump!”

“I don’t know just what a ‘trump’ is,” said Rosalie, “tho of course I’ve heard Aunt Cynthia, and her friends talking about trumps when they are playing cards, and sometimes they are queens, and sometimes jacks, and sometimes just the cards with no pictures. Is it nice, Uncle Stanton, to be a trump?”

“Fine, I should say,” Uncle Stanton said, laughing.

“Then it doesn’t matter whether I understand what it means or not,” said Rosalie, running off to find Blanford and tell him the great news that she and Lillian were cousins.

Saturday came, as all longed-for days will come if we wait patiently, and with it came Bert and Guarda.

Rosalie was an apt pupil, Stanton less quick to learn, but both were willing to work, and Bert and Guarda were interested in their new pupils.

Rosalie wondered if Stanton, when afternoon arrived, would refuse to go to Madam Claire’s class, but Stanton at lunch remarked that there was no time to lose if they were to be prompt.

He was ready before Rosalie was and stood in the hall whistling when she came down the stairs.

“Why didn’t you start along?” she asked. “You don’t care to be late, and you will be if you wait until I am half-way there before you start.”

“I’m going to walk along *with* you,” said Stanton.

“I’m *only a girl*,” she said, laughing.

“I know I used to say that,” Stanton said, looking abashed, “haven’t I been saying lately that you’re a trump? Didn’t I say yesterday that you were as good as a boy cousin any day?”

“Yes, you did say that,” Rosalie admitted, slowly.

“Well, then, let’s be starting,” said Stanton, so off they went, Stanton for the first time showing an attempt at courtesy.

He did not talk as they walked along. He would have preferred to have gone over to the class alone, but he remembered that

Rosalie had given up many play hours to help him with lessons, or to amuse him when the days were tedious and long, and he knew that it was nothing more than fair to be kind to her.

It was not that he disliked Rosalie. Indeed, he had begun to think of her as a good little friend, but he was afraid that the boys would tease him.

It happened that the boys had all along thought it rather mean that he could not be at least friendly toward Rosalie, who was well-liked by all her friends and classmates.

When they saw the two approaching, Brant Erling cried out:

“Well, well! At last Stanton Gifford is showing decent manners.”

“Sure enough!” said Charles Winton, “And it’s about time.”

“My sister Lillian thinks there’s no one like Rosalie Dare,” said Merwin Glynn, “and Mother agrees with her.”

“Well, who *is* dearer than Rosalie?” Hilda Trent asked, to which Iris and Lillian cried, as with one voice: “No one anywhere is half so dear as Rosalie Dare. I’m glad Stanton Gifford is beginning to act half-decent.”

“He is behaving better lately,” said Hilda, “so maybe some day he’ll be quite pleasant.”

“*Maybe*, but we’ll wait and see,” said Brant Erling.

The afternoon passed pleasantly. Stanton tried earnestly to do his best, and when oh, wonder of wonders, he asked Rosalie to dance with him, he found her as patient, as willing to help him, as she had been with other things.

After the class, several girls and boys were going their way home, so Rosalie and Stanton had fine company all the way.

So well had Rosalie helped Stanton with his lessons that a few weeks after his return to school, he won second place in his class, and that aroused his ambition so that he determined to work to win first place.

Uncle Stanton was delighted, while Aunt Cynthia could not express her pride and happiness at Stanton's progress.

Stanton himself was happier than he had ever been before.

He had hated study, disliked nearly every one, and was generally disagreeable and unhappy.

Now that he was hard at work at his studies, he was knowing the joy of success, and yet another thing added to his happiness.

During the long, tedious weeks that had kept him indoors he had learned the true worth of his friends, and now, because he felt kind and genial toward all, he found himself exceedingly popular.

He had lost the sullen frown that had marred his appearance, and now he looked like a happy, good-tempered boy that one might like to know.

CHAPTER XII

IN MAYTIME

WHEN spring came she touched the trees so that leaf-buds appeared, and here and there a shrub showed buds that soon would be flowers. Pots of yellow jonquils peeped from windows, and bright red tulips were everywhere.

Rosalie was at the head of her class, while Stanton had also won first place.

One day a letter came from dear Aunt Constance saying that they would soon be on their way home from California, and that they would stop at Uncle Stanton's home to call for Rosalie.

“Bruce and I are eager to see you, dear,

and we are planning a lovely summer. It is charming here in California, but dreams of home and you, little Rosalie, are making me eager to start, so I am already packing a few things."

"Aunt Constance is coming! Aunt Constance is coming!" sang Rosalie as she danced out through the hall.

"Well, I declare! Anybody would say you were glad to leave here!" cried Stanton, who was just coming in from school.

"It isn't that I'm glad to leave *here*," declared Rosalie. "It's that I'm glad to go *there*, and to see Uncle Bruce and Aunt Constance again. Why wouldn't I be glad to see them? They've been away nine months. Why, Stanton, when I came here last September I was only seven, and now I'm eight."

"It sounds like a whole year's differ-

ence, and it is only nine months," said Stanton.

"I wasn't eight till October," Rosalie replied. "You were nine when I came, and you weren't ten till December, so you've had a new birthday only six months, but you seem to enjoy it.

"When folks ask how old you are, I notice how you hurry to say, 'Ten,' but you don't say anything about being ten only six months, Stanton."

"You two children must practise your Spanish dance so that you may be able to show it to our guests when they arrive. Think how pleased they will be if you do it well," said Aunt Cynthia.

"We might practise a bit before dinner," said Rosalie, and off they ran to wind the victrola, and go through the fine figures a few times before six o'clock.

Uncle Stanton came in while they were busy practising.

Aunt Cynthia told him of the letter, and he sighed, as he took a chair beside her.

“We are going to miss her, more than we dream,” he said, “and now I know what it meant for Bruce and Constance to let us have her for so many months. Rosalie is a sunbeam in the house, and she has done more for Stanton than any one else could have done.”

“You are right, Stanton,” Aunt Cynthia said, “but now that he is doing so much better in every way, I believe he will continue, even when Rosalie is with Uncle Bruce. I do wish she was to be here a few months longer, though.”

“Do you think we could ever be wholly willing to have her go?” Uncle Stanton asked.

"No," Aunt Cynthia replied, "I don't believe we ever could."

Out on a vine-covered veranda in sunny California, Uncle Bruce and Aunt Constance were talking of Rosalie, and how soon they would be able to see her.

"She must have grown quite a bit in the months since we have seen her," said Aunt Constance, "but I know she has not changed. She will be the same loving Rosalie."

"I earnestly hope Stanton has changed," said Uncle Bruce with a laugh, "for he was a noisy scamp the last time that I saw him, and surely if he has grown any noisier than he was then, I shall plan to fill my ears with cotton."

"I have an idea that he has improved," said Aunt Constance. "Rosalie does not

say so when she writes, but at first she used to avoid mentioning him in her letters," she continued, "but now she often speaks of him. Once she said that he was doing home work, and that she was helping him. At another time she said that he was helping his father about something, I have forgotten what, and last week she wrote that he had worked to reach the head of his class, and had just brought home his report, and he had won first place. That makes me think that he has improved. When we were there, his father was greatly annoyed by his laziness."

"Well, we will hope for the best," said Uncle Bruce, "but when I think how much improvement would have been necessary to make him appear even half decent, I am not able to feel wildly glad to meet him."

"But you want to see Rosalie," said

Aunt Constance, "and you have to go there to see her."

"Now, seeing Rosalie is a very different thing," said Uncle Bruce. "I'd go anywhere to see Rosalie."

Others were talking of Rosalie.

Aunt Lucia Curtis and Uncle Jason were standing in the doorway, and looking off across their sun-kissed meadows. Their farm consisted of many acres of fertile land, and they believed it to be one of the fairest spots in the country, as indeed it was.

"What a wonderful place for a child like Rosalie to spend the summer," said Aunt Lucia. "I mean to ask Constance to come up here with her for a long visit."

"I think Rosalie would be more contented here in summer than in winter," Uncle Jason said.

“I’ll write to Constance now, and you mail it, Jason, when you go down to the center,” said Aunt Lucia. “I’ll send it to Cynthia and when Constance reaches there, she’ll find it waiting for her.”

And while kindly Aunt Lucia sat at a quaint little table by the window writing an urgent invitation for Rosalie, Aunt Blanche Davenport was telling a dear friend her own opinion of Rosalie’s winter at her Aunt Cynthia’s home.

“But I thought this little niece was coming to spend the winter with you, Blanche,” the caller said, “You said so.”

“I did invite her to, but Cynthia outwitted me. Cynthia is a dear, good woman, but very pushing, *very* pushing, my dear.

“She has rarely been to see Constance. The last time was when Rosalie was a baby. Well, it amounts to this: We three,

Cynthia, Lucia, and I met, and after a time, Cynthia spoke of Rosalie. Of course we had heard all along that she was a dear little girl, very charming and sweet-tempered, and Cynthia kept telling how dear she was, but when Lucia said that she would enjoy having her for a few months as a little guest, and I said the same, Cynthia hastened to say that it was already arranged that Rosalie should spend the winter with her."

"Well," said the lady, "you must make up your mind that you had less care during the winter."

"But she is no care at all," said Aunt Blanche. "Cynthia says so. She wrote the other day that she had never seen a child, barely eight years old, who could do almost everything for herself."

"If she is no care, she is a wonder," declared the lady.

"She is, if all that Cynthia says is true," Aunt Blanche replied.

She was silent for a moment, then she said:

"I think I'll write a letter to Constance and tell her that I think Rosalie's next visit should be to *me*. If I wait, Lucia Curtis will get one there first."

Aunt Blanche's caller laughed softly.

"You are trying to 'get there first'," said the lady, "and isn't that what you accused Mrs. Gifford of doing?"

"Cynthia *went* there to invite her," explained Aunt Blanche, "while I am merely writing."

Aunt Blanche's friend did not see that one invitation differed greatly from the other, but she did not say so. Aunt

Blanche was quick-tempered, and easily offended.

Uncle Bruce and Aunt Constance arrived one sunny morning just after Stanton and Rosalie had gone to school.

There was much to tell of their long sojourn in California, but soon Aunt Constance was eagerly asking all about Rosalie.

“She is the dearest child,” said Aunt Cynthia, “and I don’t know what we should have done if she had not been with us while Stanton was recovering. Really, she amused him, studied with him, and she cheered me like a ray of sunshine.

“As for Stanton,—well, he was always a dear boy, but perhaps—just a *trifle* wilful at times, and well—not fond of study, but now he is at the head of his class, and,

oh, quite a fine, manly boy, I assure you. His father is very proud of him."

Aunt Constance drew a long breath, while Uncle Bruce's eyes twinkled.

Uncle Stanton had told Rosalie that the expected guests would be with them at dinner, and Rosalie could hardly keep her mind upon her lessons because of the delightful thought that Uncle Bruce and Aunt Constance would so soon arrive.

Imagine her surprise when she ran in after school to find them already waiting to see her.

She dropped her books on the nearest chair, and flew straight across the room to Aunt Constance's open arms.

"Oh, I'm so glad, so *glad!*" she cried, then to Uncle Bruce she ran, to be warmly clasped again.

"I've missed you so," she said when a

bit calmer. "Uncle Stanton and Aunt Cynthia have been so dear to me, but I love you all, so I can't really spare *one* of you."

Aunt Cynthia left the room for a moment, and Rosalie hurriedly whispered:

"And you'll be so surprised when you see Stanton! He isn't like what dear Aunt Cynthia used to say, but he is different since he was so badly hurt. You almost wouldn't know him."

Uncle Bruce shook his head, laughing softly, and at that moment lunch was announced, Aunt Cynthia returned, and so nothing more was said of Stanton.

Just after four he ran up the steps.

"See you to-morrow!" he shouted to the boys, and rushed in at the door that Blanford held open.

"Hello, Rosalie!" he cried, "No lessons

to work on to-night. I've prepared every one."

Coming in out of the bright light he had not noticed the visitors. Now he saw them, and went straight to Aunt Constance, his hand outstretched.

"I'm glad you've come, Aunt Constance, and you, too, Uncle Bruce," he said turning to greet the uncle who had never liked him.

Uncle Bruce, at a glance, saw the improvement, of which Rosalie had spoken so decidedly, and he grasped Stanton's hand cordially.

"All right now, Stanton?" he asked kindly, adding, "You look fine."

"I feel fine," said Stanton, "and I'm not smashing other people's hats now," and he laughed.

Uncle Bruce laughed, too, and he noticed

that the sullen frown had disappeared from Stanton's face.

Aunt Constance was amazed to find two letters waiting for her on her dresser, when, after a pleasant evening, she retired to her room.

"Well, Bruce," she said, when she had opened them, and glanced at their contents, "Here is a letter from Lucia, and another from Blanche, each begging for a visit from Rosalie, and we haven't had her in our own home yet, after a winter's absence. Of course they do not ask her to come at once, but Lucia wishes her to come for the summer, and Blanche asks her to spend the winter at her home."

"Now, Connie, don't think of it in just that way. We agreed that Rosalie should spend a number of months with each of her aunts, but in regard to Lucia's invitation

for the summer, we are invited to be with Rosalie on the farm."

"I remember that, and if Rosalie wishes to go to Lucia's, it will be a comfort to go, too. Well, we shall have two weeks of May, and all June and July in our dear little home, and then we can go to Lucia for August and a part of September."

They spent a few days at the Stanton home, and at last the day came to say, "Good-bye," they said it with regret. Their visit had been pleasant and Stanton had added to their pleasure.

He stood on the steps when they entered the car to go to the station, and bravely waved his hand, but when they were gone he said:

"I don't see why she couldn't stay with us, as well as with them, and we'll miss her, she's been such a little sport!"

The train-ride home seemed rather long, but as they drew near the town, their eyes brightened, for it looked as if in gala dress to welcome them. The apple-blossoms were opening, and everywhere the town looked gay and festive.

Closely the two who so loved her watched Rosalie.

“There’s something nice everywhere,” she said, her brown eyes shining, “but home is best of all, isn’t it?” she said.

“It surely is,” said Aunt Constance.

“And when I go to see my other aunts I’ll enjoy it,” she said, “but I know now, I’ll always be glad when I come back.”

“You used to long to see other places,” said Uncle Bruce.

“Oh, yes,” said Rosalie, “and to see what was on the other side of those hills. I’ll like to see all sorts of places, but I’ll

always like *this* home, where you and dear Aunt Constance live, best.”

When the train drew up at the station, and Uncle Bruce helped Rosalie to the platform, a small figure darted towards them. It was Lola Foss, and the two playmates danced up and down in their excitement.

“Whee! What fun we’ll have now you’re here again!” cried Lola, “and I’ll run off now to tell Della Payson, and Hal Dana that you’ve come,” and away she ran, turning to wave her hand as she flew up the street.

Long after Rosalie was in bed that night, Uncle Bruce and Aunt Constance sat talking of her.

“It was a wonderful test for a little girl to live in the house with such a young rascal as Stanton was, and it is greatly to her

credit that Stanton has so improved. His father told me that it is Rosalie's good influence, patience, and bravery that have made a kindly, manly boy of Stanton, and I know that that is true, but how did she do it, the little fairy?"

"Rosalie is a dear," said Aunt Constance. "What is puzzling me now is that Aunt Blanche's daughter, Claire is such a different problem. Should you say that Rosalie would be happy there?"

"My dear, any one who could live with Stanton as he *used* to be, ought to be able to live in the house happily with nearly anything," said Uncle Bruce, "not even excepting a wildcat."

Those who would like to follow Rosalie to Aunt Blanche Davenport's home, to enjoy the exciting happenings and to see Rosalie

with her Cousin Claire, may read of all these things in:

“What Rosalie Dare Won.”

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